

# BEWARE! ANARCHIST!

A Life for Freedom

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
**AUGUSTIN  
SOUCHY**

TRANSLATED & INTRODUCED BY  
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AFTERWORD BY SAM DOLGOFF



## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1981 I visited Augustin Souchy in Munich, where he lived in a small apartment on a small pension. Well over eighty, he was already half blind and also suffering from a pulmonary disorder, but in spite of his physical ailments he was still going strong.

Souchy and I took long walks through the city that summer, discussing not only the political situation in Germany and the world, but also, and more specifically, various details regarding my project to translate his “magnum opus,” *Beware! Anarchist! A Life for Freedom*, into English.

I had been impressed by a positive review of the book in the independent Leftist periodical, *Wiener Tagebuch*, by Erich Hackl. Under the influence of Souchy’s unique personality, as revealed in this autobiography, I decided—although I did not fully share his anarchosyndicalist beliefs—to translate the book and present it to the English-speaking public. The author’s agreement came promptly, and our personal meeting soon followed.

Augustin Souchy was by no means a “fanatic.” He was a serious and knowledgeable student of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer; a consistent war-resister; a prolific pamphleteer; a major figure in the International



Workers' Association (IWA); an anarchosyndicalist determined to put theory into practice.

At the outbreak of World War I, when so many loud-mouthed "pacifist" intellectuals in Germany and elsewhere submitted, with various excuses, to the military draft, Souchy courageously escaped Germany and went into voluntary exile in Sweden, taking upon himself all the hardships involved. Because of his antiwar agitation he was deported to Norway, and then to Denmark, from which he was again immediately expelled—to Sweden. For the duration of the war, he lived semilegally and illegally in Denmark and Sweden on the meager income he derived as a foreign-language tutor and writer of articles for Scandinavian syndicalist papers.

After the war he went back to Germany, and then spent several months in revolutionary Russia, which he left deeply disappointed. His full-length account of his Russian experiences, *The Workers and Peasants of Russia: How They Live*, was published in Berlin in 1920 and in an English translation two years later by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), in Chicago, with an introduction by George Williams. When I met him in 1981, Souchy was one of the very few surviving activists who had had personal contact with Lenin.

Although in principle an anti-militarist and war-resister, Souchy was actively involved in the Spanish Civil War against Franco's dictatorship. In revolutionary Spain he helped organize "collectives" based on voluntary, free association. His book on this experience, *With the Peasants of Aragon*, was jointly published by Cienfuegos Press in England and Soil of Liberty in Minneapolis in 1982, translated and introduced by Souchy's longtime comrade, Abe Bluestein.

Eventually Souchy came to be the best-informed specialist on the varieties of workers' control and self-management, having made detailed firsthand studies of the very different approaches to this question in Russia, Spain, Israel (the kibbutzim), Yugoslavia, Cuba and Portugal.



During World War II Souchy lived in exile in Mexico. After the war he lectured in almost every Central and South American country as well as in the West Indies and Africa. In his later years he also lectured and organized fund-raising campaigns in the U.S. and Canada, particularly in support of the revived Spanish anarchosyndicalist movement, before retiring to Munich.

*Beware! Anarchist! A Life for Freedom* was originally published in German in 1977 by the firm of Hermann Luchterhand, in Darmstadt and Neuwied; it went through three editions.

It gives me great satisfaction that the Charles H. Kerr Company, which for over a hundred years has published so many of the world's classics of radical literature, has found the ways and means to bring out this important contemporary book. These memoirs will acquaint English-speaking readers with many aspects of twentieth-century history that are still little known or misunderstood, and will help them re-examine ideas long regarded as obsolete.

And it could not have come at a better time. In the light of the present break-up of the Eastern European pseudo-socialist economies, and the concurrent mounting crisis in the West, heralded by corporate flight, large-scale union-busting, mass homelessness and environmental devastation, Souchy's vision of a decentralized, non-bureaucratic socialism once more assumes a vital actuality.

Theo Waldinger

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# **BEWARE! ANARCHIST!**

## *A Life for Freedom*

### *Chapter 1*

#### **From Nonconformist to Antimilitarist**

My father was one of the earliest Social Democrats of Silesia. One day—I was about eight years old—a boy I was playing with called me, scornfully and contemptuously, “social democrat.” When I asked my mother why this word was meant to be an insult, she put her finger mysteriously to her mouth and told me that social democrats were once outlaws. In 1890, only two years before my birth, the so-called “Socialist Law” (*Sozialistengesetz*) had been repealed. Mother told me of the harassment to which our family was subjected while the law was still in force. Frequently, police came to our house in search of forbidden pamphlets. However, illegal pamphlets, brochures and letters were well hidden in the attic and the socialist newspaper was so skilfully placed in the bird cage that the guardians of the law never found anything.

After the defeat of the Russian Revolution in 1905, revolutionaries from “Congress Poland”—at that time part of the Russian Empire—came to our border town, Ratibor. Many came to our house and their tales and discussions about revolution and socialism were for a thirteen-year-old boy an important event and revelation. A new world rose before my spiritual eye and from then on it was my dream to become a revolutionary.

I did not have to dream for long: a few months later, my older brother and I attended a celebration of the emperor’s birthday, and both of us remained demonstratively seated



while the imperial hymn "Heil Dir im Siegerkranz" (Hail thee in the victor's wreath) was sung. We were rudely expelled from the hall. Proud of our courage, we sang while walking home the refrain of an 1848 student song, which we often heard our father singing:

If people should ask you what does Absalom [Wilhelm]  
Tell them he is already dangling  
Yet not from a rope and not from a tree  
But from this dream of a Republican Germany.

Our obstinate resistance caused a great sensation and of course had an unpleasant epilogue in school.

In the years that followed, social democratic speakers came from out of town for meetings and lectures which I never missed. Such events were topics of discussion for weeks to come. I remember very clearly a lecture by Adolf Hoffman, a member of parliament. His acrimonious heckling during parliament sessions and his pamphlet on the Ten Commandments (*The Ten Commandments and the Propertied Class*) made him one of the most popular politicians. He never missed an occasion for witty and sarcastic remarks—"Mister Oldenburg Januschau is lying through his teeth"—which brought him many calls to order. The clerical newspaper *Lokalanzeiger* published a cartoon showing him with a flaming torch in one hand and the "Ten Commandments Bible" in the other, as a warning to all well-meaning citizens. But this was the most efficient propaganda effect my father, one of the organizers, could have wished for. The hall was filled to capacity and the speaker explained the ways and goals of social democracy to his listeners in a simple, easily understandable manner.

As a fourteen-year-old boy, I had already read August Bebel's *Out of My Life*. Bebel was highly esteemed in our family. He was, before going into politics, a master turner like my father himself. I started to read indiscriminately all the socialist literature I could lay my hands on. Slowly but surely I began to doubt the infallibility of Christian doctrine and turned into an agnostic. This process was triggered by my brother Franz who persuaded me one Sunday morning to visit the monument to Eichendorff instead of going to church as we were wont to. The romantic hymn we were singing on this hike, "O valleys wide, O lofty mountains, O



green forests," was for us a prayer to nature and meant to our souls more than singing of mystic psalms in church. My atheist father of course approved of our escapade, but my Catholic mother reprimanded us. We decided henceforth not to say anything at home.

I could no longer stand life in a small town. Thirst for knowledge and lust for adventure made me leave. A night's ride in a fourth class railway compartment brought me to Berlin at a cost of 9.50 Marks. Here was the starting point of my life as a militant: attending meetings and distributing pamphlets, discussions and schooling. As the son of an old party member and a second generation socialist, I again met Adolf Hoffman and was introduced to Eduard Bernstein, Karl Liebknecht, Julius Borchardt, Clara Zetkin and other luminaries of social democracy. During a conversation I had with Fidus at a midsummer festival in Friederichshagen, Gustav Landauer's essay, "A New Way Toward Community," was mentioned, while reading it, a new bright star appeared on my spiritual horizon. Now I began reading works of Max Stirner, Eugen Duehring, Peter Kropotkin and thus got acquainted with another variant of socialism. What I found most appealing was the shifting of responsibility for the realization of socialism from the center to the periphery, i.e., from the legislative corporate body to the working people themselves. It became clear to me that the freedom of all can only be achieved when based on the self-consciousness of the individual. If an elected representative takes responsibility for a number of years, as is the case in representative democracy, the self-determination of the people becomes a fiction. Socialism, as I understood now, and was longing to see realized, should become, over and beyond the solution of the mere bread and butter problem, a practical social philosophy concerned with all aspects of community life. I began to doubt the overall validity of the materialistic or economic aspect and the objective deterministic course of history.

Since I already had lost faith in the Christian dogma, I left the church as soon as I became of age. After this, I embraced "Monism," a philosophy widely accepted in progressive circles. Later, under the influence of the French philosopher J. H. Boex-Borel, whose book about Pluralism, (*Le Pluralisme, Essai sur la Discontinuité et l'Hétérogenéité*



*des Phénomènes*, 1909) made a deep impression on me. I rejected Monism also because it did not seem to me to give a clear answer to my search for truth. I entirely abandoned the principle of "Unity" philosophically as well as politically—one god, one cosmic leitmotif, one (chosen) people, one leader—long before fascism developed its totalitarian social doctrine from it. I could not solve the riddle of the universe, but neither could the theologic and atheistic philosophers.

At an electoral meeting in Neukoeln, where Clara Zetkin solicited votes for the Social Democratic Party, Gustav Landauer explained his ideas about socialism and I decided to follow the latter. Gustav Landauer's personality corresponded to the image I had created of him while reading his books. His tall frame, high brow, visionary eyes and the highly intellectual features of his face framed by a Christlike beard, gave him an expression of marked charisma. Two years prior to this meeting, in 1908, he and his political friends had founded the Socialist Federation. Based on the philosophies of Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, Landauer formulated its program. For him, socialism was a new cultural system supported by federations of independent economic, communal organizations exchanging their products "justly" among themselves and finally replacing capitalism and the state. The goal was a socialist republic which, according to Landauer, was "Anarchy" in the original sense of the word and the "Order of the Federations through Voluntarism."

This was the kind of socialism I found intuitively attractive. There was no formal admission policy for membership, no membership cards nor fees. Evenings I helped out at headquarters, Wrangelstrasse 34, Berlin O, with the mailing of *The Socialist*, a fortnightly edited by Gustav Landauer. The compositor, Max Mueller, took care of typesetting for his room and board and the owner of a small printing shop, Wilhelm Habicht, did the printing job at a reduced rate. Landauer himself did not ask for any monetary reward for his contributions. At our regular evening meetings alcohol and smoking were frowned upon. There was among us also a young Serb who, as he told us, preached the gospel of abstinence in his father's beer garden, whereupon he was sent out into the world to look around for "experience." There were fifteen



local branches; one of them, called "Action," was founded in Munich by Erich Muehsam.

We were not amateur revolutionaries who sought to create a new social order by force; neither were we solitary dreamers. We based our stand on reality. In our opinion the Social Democratic Party did not come up to expectations when faced with the most pressing problems of that time, because of its dogmatism and opportunism. Dogmatic was its neglect of the cooperative movement, which was disdainfully called "bourgeois quackery" by the chief ideological influences on the party, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. However, in 1910 when the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen, breaking out of its Marxist eggshell, came out for the formation of cooperatives, the German party followed suit. We considered opportunistic the omission of antimilitaristic propaganda which would have been of eminent importance in militaristic Prussia. Moreover, we became interested in the land reform movement. Although we did not see in the establishment of agrarian cooperatives the solution of all social evils, we considered them as fundamental models of a socialist order. We participated in all popular movements for social justice, cultural progress and above all in the preservation of peace. When the expansion of world trade led to frictions among the competing powers, the symptoms of an imminent world conflagration became more and more apparent. The appearance of a German warship at the French-Moroccan port city of Agadir, the Tripolis war between Italy and Turkey, the Balkan wars in which Austria-Hungary and Serbia—the latter backed by Russia—faced each other were sure signs of a nearing catastrophe.

The people, by direct action, could have secured the preservation of peace. The country where the initiative for direct action should have been taken, the country with the greatest war potential, was Germany. No firm commitment for peace was of course expected from the nationalistic parties. It would have been incumbent upon the Social Democratic Party, represented in the Reichstag by a substantial number of representatives and closely linked to and backed by the all-powerful unions, to initiate action. However, what was the attitude of the party when confronted with these fateful problems?



At the Congress of the Socialists held in Stuttgart in 1907, a French antimilitarist, Gustave Hervé, initiated a discussion on antiwar actions to prevent war, above all on the most effective action, the general strike. The German social democrats were in opposition. For them "general strike" was nothing but "general nonsense." In some Marxist circles the dogmatic approach was propounded that war was the necessary corollary of capitalism and could only be prevented by establishment of a socialist order. The Social Democratic Party will defend the "Fatherland" against any attack by external forces, especially by backward and economically underdeveloped Russia. This reasoning was fundamental to "Social Patriotism." The chauvinist parties proffered the slogan "The spirit of the German Nation will be the world's salvation." Alas! To "Social Patriots" the German military uniform was more important than the international red insignia . . . The draft of a resolution, exhorting the workers to direct action against war and demanding of the socialists a vote against a declaration of war and war credits met with a Social Democratic veto. Hervé, disappointed, resigned and later turned chauvinist. The only Social Democrats for action were Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

This performance was repeated at the International Congress of Socialists in Copenhagen in 1910. This time it was the Englishman Keir Hardie who in the name of his party appealed to the socialists of all countries to fight together against war and militarism. He proposed not only disarmament but a fight for complete elimination of the militaristic mentality. A resolution, drafted and submitted by him and the Frenchman Vaillant, advocated an international antiwar campaign and a general strike of the workers of war industries and international traffic. Again the German Social Democrats rejected the resolution draft in contrast to the Swedish Social Democrats who exhibited a positive attitude. To prevent a split in the international the draft was put to a vote. Thus the German Social Democrats were the principal opponents of a consistent antimilitaristic strategy. Bebel wistfully criticized in the German Reichstag the shiny buttons on the German army tunics which might serve as a convenient target for the enemy. He also declared that he himself—an old man as he was then—would be quite willing to take up arms in a war against czarist Russia.



We young socialists however sided with our French and English friends. We wanted to fight against war and militarism with all our youthful vigor. The Socialist Federation formed an ad hoc committee to prepare a meeting of workers for the purpose of discussing ways and means to implement actions for peace. We also believed, like the French and English socialists, that a general strike is preferable to a general war. We were certain that the antimilitaristic and syndicalist oriented French working class movement would show solidarity with any anti-war actions initiated in Germany. World peace now hinged on the solidarity of the German and French working class.

Gustav Landauer wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Abolition of War by Self-determination of the People: Questions to the German Workers*. We had 100,000 copies printed.<sup>1</sup> However, before it came to their distribution the informer Prawitz Reimann notified the police who, on December 4, 1911, seized the printed copies because they contained a call for a general strike. The confiscation was illegal; there was no law on the books which prohibited quitting the place of work or going on strike.

Nevertheless, a court decision in Berlin upheld the police action March 25, 1912. The pamphlet remained on the list of forbidden literature and all copies as well as the set type were destroyed. No one person could be charged due to the fact that the incriminating article was signed "Anonymous." Only many years later, in 1919, was the pamphlet published under Landauer's name in a volume of his collected essays called *Testimony*.

At this point I want to digress from my presentation of consecutive events to report on a personal experience. On March 18, 1912 some comrades and I placed a wreath on the tomb of the victims of the massacres of 1848 in Friedrichshain. Leaving the cemetery, I was arrested by police and underwent many hours of questioning at headquarters. Inquiries by police showed that I was born in Germany, registered with the police and had no criminal record. Subsequently I was released from police custody. I was arrested only because I was a newcomer to the movement and as such not known to police. Although membership in a liberal socialist organization was not illegal, everybody making use of this constitutional right was watched, controlled and harassed



by the police of this Prussian-German authoritarian state.

In 1912, the expansion of the Balkan conflagration into a general European war was avoided. However, after the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife by the Serbian nationalist Princip in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, the danger of armed conflict among the European great powers became acute. Now a fateful test would determine whether the people's desire for peace would prevail over chauvinistic nationalism, whether the ideas of humanistic socialism would be stronger than the international interest of capital. On July 29, 1914 the representatives of the Socialist International met in Brussels to take a stand in the face of the danger of imminent war.

In the course of the discussions it became evident that with the German and Austrian social democrats the nationalistic feeling was far stronger than their adherence to socialist internationalism. Karl Legien, the delegate of the German unions, gave his French counterpart Leon Jouhaux unmistakably to understand that, in the event of war the German workers would march and not go on strike, while only a few days before the mouthpiece of the French unions, *La Bataille Syndicaliste*, had come out for the general strike as a means to prevent war. Thus, the Social Democratic Party, the strongest section of the Socialist International, was responsible for war mongering by voting in the Reichstag (represented by 110 deputies) for the granting of war credits. Four months later, on December 2, the Social Democratic faction in the Reichstag voted again for additional war credits. Only Karl Liebknecht and Otto Ruehle dissented. Later on others joined them. When the war started I was in Vienna and visited a group of communist anarchists founded by Rudolf Grossman (Pierre Ramus). Although police were well aware that this was a movement of nonviolent Kropotkinians and Tolstoyans, we were subjected to frequent harassment. Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, I was arrested and deported to the country of my birth. My right hand was manacled to the left hand of a companion in misery. Even at night the handcuffs were not removed. After two days I was handed over to the garrison commander of a small Silesian town as a suspect individual. On the warrant paper a remark stood out in big letters underlined in red ink: "BEWARE! ANARCHIST." This label



should have been pasted on my forehead, for I had no dynamite in my suitcase. Then I was admitted to a hospital because of an acute but not dangerous heart condition. Furloughed for convalescence, I did not return to avoid being drafted into the army. The war for Emperor and Fatherland was not my war.

A few more words about Gustav Landauer whose ideas are still misunderstood because he did not think of parliament as an instrument for turning socialism into reality. He lacked two attributes essential for a politician: vanity and a desire for a life of comfort. He lived and died a poor man. When Kramer-Badoni called him a "Prophet of a curious sentimental Anarchism"<sup>2</sup> he apparently did not know that Landauer was one of the first who propounded establishment of a league of nations for securing a permanent peace. At Christmas 1916 he sent a letter to the then American president Woodrow Wilson, in which he wrote, among other things:

At this time it should be imperative that the countries participating in this war, that is, all belligerent and also neutral states, insist, in agreement with their respected elected representatives, on a stipulation in the peace treaty that calls—within a certain period—for summoning of an international congress of states. The decisions of this organization should be binding and it should—independent of the provisory peace treaty—bring under its jurisdiction two spheres that unfortunately were hitherto considered to be interpolitical affairs of every state and make them the common causes of all states: (1) armament, (2) surveillance of the constitutional laws of every state in order to guarantee the assumption of responsibility of the entire people for the policy of the government of the respective state, by secure legal institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Landauer asked in this letter for an international conference on disarmament. Rearmament, he said, could not be merely an intrapolitical affair of states but should be regulated by lawful instruments of an international congress, the decisions of which would be binding and enforceable. It is, however, not known whether Landauer's letter ever reached Wilson. Yet several weeks later Wilson launched his famous manifesto which propounded similar ideas. And two years later the League of Nations was established in Geneva.



*Chapter 2*  
**1914-1919:  
Deserter in Scandinavia**

In the good old times—good only for oldsters lamenting the bygone days of their youth—the poor were poorer and the living conditions of the masses were worse than they are today. Yet, before World War I, we enjoyed liberties now lost. Before 1914, everyone could travel across all of Europe without any document of identity provided they had a railroad or a boat ticket for travel from continent to continent. Passports were only required for trips to the colonies or czarist Russia. After the assassination of the American president William McKinley by the Polish anarchist Leo Czolgosz in 1901 suspect travelers arriving in the U.S. were scrutinized. Scrutinized? When a German immigrant was asked whether he was an anarchist and answered with feigned naivete “I am a cabinet maker,” he got his landing permit without much ado. Thanks to this liberal freedom of movement which lasted through the first month of the war, I could make my way to Sweden without trouble. In Stockholm I was introduced to Emil Manus Swensson who, as a war resister in Sweden, experienced the same trouble I had in Prussia. He ignored the summons of the draft board. When police came to get him, he rolled himself up in a carpet so short that his legs were sticking out. In this outfit he was brought to the barracks, but released after a short time. We remained friends all our lives.



At that time Sweden was still very far from being a welfare state. The living standard of the workers was low, unemployment widespread, and unemployment compensation nonexistent. Social security was only in a budding state. The working day was nine to ten, and even eleven to twelve hours. Clashes between employer and worker were very frequent. During the big dockers' strike in 1908, the shipowners hired scabs from England. When appeals from the Swedish workers to their English comrades not to stab them in the back in their fight for higher wages went unheeded they resorted to scare tactics. A homemade bomb was placed on the boat *Amalthea*, docked in the port of Malmö where the scabs here housed. The bomb killed one person and injured several others. Two of the perpetrators, Anton Nilson and Algot Rosberg, were sentenced to death and a third, Alfred Stern, to imprisonment for life. Shortly after the sentencing of the *Amalthea* men, a campaign was launched for the release of the imprisoned dockers. Nine years later they were pardoned. I took part in the celebrations following their release; this was a feast for all liberals and progressives in Sweden. At the lowest rung of the social ladder were the "Rallare" who during the working week or even longer were separated from their families and lived in primitive huts, exposed to the vagaries of nature. "You have come like a spring bird to our cold northern night," a forester said to me while he was heating water for coffee in a battered kerosene boiler, when I was there to give a lecture.

Forty years later, lecturing again in the northern part of Sweden, I was invited by a forester into his tidy one-family home. Now the lumberjacks went to work and back home in their own cars or shared a ride with several others. The trees are being cut with power saws. Work there has lost its former hardship. In 1974 the lumberjacks, by a successful strike, won a fixed monthly salary.

Many different opinions arose with regard to the evaluation of the problems created by the World War of 1914. King Gustav V and the entire royal family made no secret of their sympathy for Germany. They were supported by the army and the upper classes. The liberals and above all the social democrats sided with the western powers. The controversy between the crown and the liberal chancellor Staaff led to a



government crisis. The new government, nominated by the King, gave the green light to Sweden's entry into the war on the side of Germany.

But the Social Democratic Party, the unions, active groups of pacifists, antimilitarists, the socialist youth and syndicalists were together fighting for peace. The government sought to stifle opposition by all means. Newspapers calling for direct action against the entry of Sweden into the war were confiscated. The spokesmen of the Social Democratic youth organization, Zeth Hoeglund, Ivan Oljelund and Eric Heden, were sentenced to prison terms for high treason while a peace congress organized by them resolved: "to make all necessary preparations for extra-parliamentary mass action against the war plans of the government."

Politically the old Sweden was nearer to the third class suffrage of Prussia than to the West. In 1909 only 19 percent of the male population had the right to vote. Meanwhile the Social Democratic Workers Party founded in 1889 developed fast. At the outbreak of the war it was the strongest party and in 1920 formed the government—to be sure only for six months. In 1910 members of a union opposition, under the influence of anarchistically inclined young socialists and on the strength of the experience of the previous year's general strike, founded a syndicalist organization which still exists under the name of "Sveriges Arbetares Central Organization" (S.A.C.).<sup>4</sup> During World War I, a radical Marxist group seceded from the Social Democratic Party. In 1915 the Socialist Youth delegated representatives to the opposition Social Democrats in Zimmerwald. Here was the nucleus of the later Communist Party of Sweden. The left front came out for extra-parliamentary methods of combat.

The war brought about a severe shortage of food. Bread and other basic foods were rationed. Hunger revolts broke out in several cities. The workers demanded a reduction of food prices and allocation of common land for the cultivation of potatoes. In Stockholm demonstrations took place for the "Parliament of the Street." After the downfall of czarism in Russia, agitation reached a climax. Conservative elements organized a Defense Corps with headquarters in the Academy of War. The extra-parliamentary left became alarmed. In the "People's House" workers and soldiers frater-



nized. Marines declared their intention to disobey should they be ordered into action against demonstrating workers. The first of May, 1919 was awaited with hope and worry; one hundred thousand antiwar demonstrators marched but everything proceeded without incident. The masses did not attack castles and police and soldiers kept in the background. Sweden, a country without revolutionary traditions, seemed to want progress, now and in the future, only by evolution. In these days Stockholm had rare guests: Lenin and his comrades came from Switzerland. They got an enthusiastic reception. How could we surmise what dictatorial gifts the leader of the Bolsheviks had in mind for the Russian people! The hope of the Imperial German government that the Russian Marxists would conclude a separate peace became reality. They did not suspect that a revolution was brewing in Germany also. From his exile in London came Peter Kropotkin with his wife and daughter. These were the most prominent of many for whom Stockholm was the last sojourn on the way back to Russia, now liberated from czarist autocracy.

A short time later, a train arrived in Stockholm with sick and wounded German exchange prisoners of war in transit to Germany. The newspapers reported on the prisoner of war exchange agreement and the expected arrival of the train. I decided to draft a flyer in German to be distributed among the returning soldiers. It read as follows:

### WHY?

Innumerable victims have been sacrificed to the moloch war. Unspeakable grief has befallen and depresses millions of families. Mothers and sisters ask: Why must our sons, husbands and brothers kill and be killed? Misery increases and also the state debts of the belligerent countries rise by leaps and bounds. Soon Europe will be economically dependent upon America. Why all this, for what purpose, the boundless destruction of human life and material wealth? It is time that we, German workers and peasants, ask these questions: Who, during and after the war, will carry the heaviest burden, the tremendous debts, the interest, the support of widows and invalids? All this will be taken out of the working people, whereas the upper ten thousand make more and more money.

In 1912 Bertha Krupp had a yearly income of no less than 21 millions. Emperor Wilhelm II, one of the biggest shareholders of the firm of Krupp, had a still higher income from this source alone. Is it not because of this that he made his bellicose speeches?



Why did Krupp pay large sums to the French press for publication of war-inciting articles? Is it not a peculiar kind of love for the fatherland, when German arms manufacturers and producers of ammunition establish in France the "Société Française pour le Roulement de Billes" [ball bearing plant] where war-essential machinery to be used against the hereditary enemy is being produced? This firm delivered 50 percent of its output to Russia and 200,000 rifles to Serbia. In this war then, German workers and peasants are being killed with weapons fabricated by Germans! Did not the industrialist Thyssen say that the "Kaiser's" war speeches serve as a stimulus to Parliament for the approval of further orders to Krupp? The more arms produced the higher the profits. In this war the house of Krupp raised its share capital from 180 to 250 million Marks. We are told that this is a defensive war. Every state pretends to be the one that has been attacked. Who and where is the aggressor when all are being attacked? If we have to kill each other in order to defend ourselves from each other, the question arises: Are we enemies? Do not the French, Russian and English workers and peasants and we ourselves want to peacefully work in workshops and fields? No! we are not enemies. If it were up to us there would be no wars.

We who carry the entire burden of sacrifice have the right to be heard. We ask: What does the government want and intend? There are no enemies on our borders. Why continue the war? We do not want a war of conquest and if there is a country to offer peace, it is Germany. It is high time to stop the senseless slaughter. The workers of all countries are longing for peace. We no longer wish to be the victims of a criminal policy and tools of **RULERS WHO, WITH OUR BLOOD, REAP MONEY**, glory and honor. We, the working people of Europe and the entire world are not enemies; we want peace, freedom, justice and humanism which we hope to find in Socialism and in a free order.

On to fight for Peace and Freedom  
War on War

—A group of German workers through the intercession  
of the Socialist Youth Organization of Sweden

The returning soldiers were not the only ones to whom this flyer was distributed. The members of the German legation who came to greet them were also plastered with the flyers. I was among the socialist youth responsible for the leaflet—and the police were well aware of it—the only German. Therefore I was arrested and expelled from Sweden. A police officer escorted me by train to the border of Norway, where I was set free. The newly won freedom however, lasted only a few hours. When I arrived at the railway station of Christiana (today Oslo) three serious looking gentlemen offered to escort



me. At police headquarters I was introduced to fifty plainclothesmen and then locked up in a cell without further explanation. The police officer who brought me to the cell hinted that I was to be deported to Copenhagen. I spent a week in prison waiting for the boat. In Copenhagen I was refused entry. Danish police put me on a ferry to Sweden. Landing in Malmö I saw two exits, one for Scandinavians and one for non-Scandinavian foreigners. Observing that Scandinavians did not have to produce identification papers I used their exit. "Svensk?" asked the control officer. "Jaha" was my answer and I passed without any further hitch. But I could not stay in Sweden since I had been expelled only eight days previously.

My political friend of the freethinker Malmö newspaper *Nya Folkviljan* asked me to return to Denmark on a weekend. Many Swedes went to Denmark on Saturdays to get their fill of Danish aquavit. Sweden had a strict prohibition law on the books. Usually these tourists did not have to produce travel documents. I took the train to Helsingborg and the ferry across the sound to Helsingfors on the Danish side and arrived in Copenhagen without any incident.

During the first weeks I was very badly off. A Swedish friend who worked as a dishwasher in a hotel provided us—Manus Swensson from Stockholm also lived in Copenhagen but was unemployed—with bread and butter. In order to land a job it was necessary to be in possession of papers of identity. For in our modern civilization one can only legally exist when officially registered. As a German, I could not possibly have obtained a permit of residence, but I succeeded with the help of my friend Jonah Lundkvist, editor-in-chief of the Stockholm illustrated *Folket i Bild*, to obtain Swedish identification papers. Lundkvist sent me his birth certificate which I submitted to the Swedish consulate under his name. I did not seem to be suspect since Lundkvist and I were of the same age and I spoke Swedish with a northern accent. Without any further hindrance I got a passport. Now I was a "legal" resident in Denmark.

The Berlitz School, where I gave lessons, arranged a position for me as a tutor in the house of the landowner Munch on the island of Lolland. Born and raised as a city boy, I had not the slightest knowledge of agricultural matters. In the



vast sugar beet fields worked by Polish migrant help and in the cooperative dairies to which even the big landowners brought their milk I became interested in the problems of agriculture. This turned out to be of great benefit to me when I continued my studies of these problems during the civil war in Spain and then in Latin America and also in Israel. I laid down my experiences in several books. While I was busying myself with studies of agricultural methods and the Danish cooperative system, the German Empire collapsed. This event had tremendous repercussions in Scandinavia, particularly in Sweden. In November 1918, at a convention of the socialist left of all hues in Stockholm, a resolution was submitted with the following demands: abolition of the monarchy, disbanding of the army, formation of a government on the basis of workers' and soldiers' councils (soviets), replacement of the present parliament by a one-chamber system, establishment of an eight-hour working day, nationalization of banks and key industries, and distribution of land to the landless peasants and agricultural workers.

For the old Social Democratic Party which represented the majority of the working class these demands were held to be too far reaching. Socialist leader Hjalmar Branting, a future cabinet minister, publicly disavowed these postulates of the socialist left, which indeed had only the support of a minority in the labor movement. The only demands fulfilled were the eight-hour working day and an amendment to the voting right law. The one-chamber system was introduced many years later. Everything else remained on paper. In agricultural Denmark on the other hand, even the poor strata of the population were not starving; nevertheless they suffered from the consequences of the war. The closing of factories resulted in widespread unemployment. Price increases were followed by demands for pay raises, strikes and lock-outs. The unemployed asked for a compensation of 30 Crowns weekly, rent aid and fuel. The negative response to these demands provoked mass demonstrations in the streets. On February 11, 1919 two thousand unemployed stormed the Copenhagen stock exchange. The angry crowd saw in speculation the roots of their misery. Leaders stormed into the hall and threatened to throw the stockbrokers out, just like Jesus once did when he chased the moneylenders out of the temple.



Organized demonstrations occurred also on the Kultorvet, Grountervet and Faellespark. The organizers were indicted, fined and sentenced to prison terms for disturbance of public order.

However, the rebellion of the discontented was limited to sporadic outbursts; a revolutionary situation did not exist. The majority of the people were opposed to revolution. Characteristic of their attitude were the words of one of my neighbors: "We are really not so badly off in Denmark." The riotings were not entirely futile. One of the most important requests was granted. The working day, hitherto ten hours or more, was reduced to eight hours by law of January 1, 1920. This goes to show that, even far from an eschatological overturn, progress can be made little by little.

Communism was at that time unknown in Denmark. The radical wing of the labor movement was represented by the syndicalist oriented union opposition. In the daily *Solidaritet* the antimilitarists also had a place. The manager of this paper, Carl Iversen, and his wonderful wife gave me shelter during my first weeks in Copenhagen in their modest apartment in Prins Jorgengade. The attitude of the young Danish conscientious objectors who did not want to kill or to be killed, and refused to submit to military training, was admirable. Their membership rose from 73 in January 1918 to 203 in April 1919. The association of devoted antimilitarists amounted to several thousands. Many of them were incarcerated in prison compounds where frequent hunger strikes took place. Johannes Nielson refused to eat for forty-four days; another conscientious objector told me that food was forced into him and several of his teeth were broken in the course of this procedure. We owe it to the persistence of these idealists that Denmark was the first country to introduce a system of alternative obligatory civilian service. Many years later this model was also accepted in other countries, but in France it took half a century. The orthodox Danish conscientious objectors refused also to submit to obligatory civilian duty. They were against any kind of military service as an institution.

### Elise Ottensen-Jensen, Early Fighter for Women's Rights

In the summer of 1919 Albert Jensen—his companion was Elise Ottensen-Jensen—was deported from Denmark. Jensen,



a well-known Swedish publicist, was one of the most devoted antimilitarists, a fascinating speaker and an indefatigable proponent of libertarian socialism. Elise was dynamic and of superior intelligence. In later years she became internationally known as a fighter for sexual enlightenment, birth control and family planning. The seventeenth child of a Norwegian pastor's family, she prepared herself for a career as a dentist. As a result of a lab explosion she lost several fingers and had to change her professional endeavors. At the start of the war, she went with her companion Jensen to Copenhagen, worked as a correspondent for Norwegian newspapers and translated works by Upton Sinclair and other American and English authors. She began her life's work, the enlightenment of women, in 1920 in Sweden. The beginning was very difficult. Although Anton Nystroem, Knut Wicksell and Hinke Bergegren did much preparatory work, publicity to propagate birth control met with stiff opposition, even in social democratic circles. Thus "Ottar," as she was called now, at the outset got her only support from the Socialist Youth clubs and syndicalist organizations. After more than a decade of intense enlightenment work, many sex counseling clinics came into existence. In 1933 the Federation for Sex Enlightenment was founded in Stockholm. Hence the prerequisites of up-to-date legislative action for the establishment of sex enlightenment courses in schools and for the regulation of birth control were created. The pioneer work of Ottar and her collaborators culminated in success; Sweden became the central point of similar movements in the rest of the world.

In 1953 an international congress was held, bringing together doctors, economists and social workers for a discussion of the global implications of birth control. At this congress the International Federation for Family Planning (IFFP) was founded. Ottar was president for many years until she resigned for reasons of advanced age. In 1958 a doctoral degree, *honoris causa*, was conferred on her by the University of Upsala. I know of no other country where champions of birth control were likewise honored.

Back to Copenhagen in 1919, I felt secure in my German skin with the passport of Ernst Johan Lundkvist, but soon I found out otherwise. I fell ill with the Spanish grippe, raging over Europe and not sparing Scandinavia. I learned much



later in 1968 from Elise Jensen's memoirs, *Och livet skrev* (*As Life Wrote*) what happened to me at that time. She said: "At that time another refugee came into our life. A young German antimilitarist, Augustin Souchy was active in the Socialist Youth and was, in the general panic, deported to Norway, thence to Denmark and again to Sweden. When the Spanish grippe took on epidemic proportions he also fell victim to this dreaded disease and was a long time between life and death. He was laid up in a small room with a window to a dim backyard in Nörrebro. It was necessary to call my doctor and to confess to him the true situation of the patient. He was admitted to a Catholic hospital under the name of Lundkvist. I visited him daily; he had a high fever, spoke incoherently and did not recognize me. The nurses there were German nuns. One day one of them said to me: 'I do not understand why this patient in his fever fantasies speaks only German!' I replied boldly, 'Yes, yes, he studied several years in Germany and was such an eager student of the German language that he uses it even in his sleep.' At this moment he woke up and said: 'Ottar, don't forget Lundkvist must not die!'"

Jensen's deportation from Denmark is only understandable if one realizes the political unrest that befell the Scandinavian kingdoms as a result of the overthrow of czarism and the collapse of the German empire. The nervousness of the police was considerable. Jensen, however, was not politically active in Denmark. The underlying cause of his deportation was a letter sent to him from Sweden in which demonstrations against the military regime of General Mannerheim in Finland were mentioned. This letter came into the hands of the Danish police. Jensen was extradited to the Swedish authorities and arrested because he still had to serve four months in prison for antimilitarist activities.

### BEHIND SWEDISH BARS

When Albert Jensen was released after having served his sentence his friends made arrangements for a joyful party in Malmö which I wanted to attend with other friends from Copenhagen. Sure of myself, I presented my passport in the name of Lundkvist to the immigration officer. He took out a



police record ledger showing on one page my photo and name below. "Do you know this one?" he asked, pointing to the photo with his finger. "Gosh, he resembles me very much," I replied. "I should say so," he retorted. "That's you, yourself alright." There was no use any more in denying my identity, and subsequently I moved into the prison cell Jensen had just vacated. Brought before the court I was sentenced to six months in jail for violation of passport regulations and prohibition of reentry.

While I was in jail, revolution erupted in Germany. General Ludendorff fled to Sweden with a false passport under the name of Lundstroem, without being indicted or sentenced for his violation. My attorney, Georg Branting, the son of the later chancellor Hjalmar Branting, made the public aware of this fact. Since Ludendorff could not possibly be indicted, the higher court in Stockholm annulled the decision of the lower court in Malmö. Meanwhile I had already served a few months. However, the time was not lost. In the solitude of my cell I wrote a book—in Swedish—about Gustav Landauer, who was killed at the end of May of the same year (1919) in Munich in the course of the liquidation of the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic.

The Swedish prison system at that time was not as humane as it is today. I never had visitors and was in solitary confinement; except for the guard who brought my food I saw no human being. During the half-hour walk around the prison courtyard, the prisoners were separated by board fences and could not see each other. This was isolation in the truest sense of the word. Yet I did not suffer from loneliness.

Released from prison, I was not free however. I filed a request for permission to reside in Stockholm with the Swedish government and had to wait for the outcome in custody. It was a strange situation between imprisonment and freedom. By day I could roam around at will in the offices of police headquarters or take walks in town in the company of a policeman. By night I was locked up in a cell with bars. The police were organized in a union which published a newspaper. The editor, a police officer, asked me to write an article. I wrote about the role of the police force in a free society. The article did not, of course, appear under my name. Once, the guard invited me to his apartment when we ended



our daily walk. When we were late in coming back, the commissar, fearing that I might have escaped, called by telephone. "We are just having coffee," he was reassured, "and will be back soon." As usual I spent the night in my cell.

On Christmas Eve only one officer was on duty. His replacement failing to show up in time, my guard asked me to cover for him until his colleague appeared for duty. He reminded me that, should I escape, disciplinary action and punishment awaited him. He had complete confidence in me and I did not disappoint him. For a while I was my own guard—prisoner and policeman in one person. I was not alone for long. There was a knock at the door: timidly a young man entered and wished to file a complaint against a young girl who, he said, infected him with a venereal disease. My thoughts went to the poor girl, who was probably not aware of the consequences this action would have for her, and I tried to persuade him to desist. Our conversation lasted only a few minutes. He must have wondered about that strange policeman who did not wish to accept his complaint. Soon afterwards the real inspector arrived and recorded his deposition. The next morning at six o'clock my day guard came to take me for the usual walk. We went to church, where, according to Swedish custom, a concert was given on the first day of Christmas. Thus, I had occasion to enjoy the music of Brahms and Bruckner.

The waiting period under police guard lasted ten days. My request was turned down by the Swedish government. On January 2, 1920 I was brought to the ferry going to Sassnitz on the German island of Ruegen. I wanted to sneak into Germany by the darkness of night, afraid to be apprehended on arrival as a draft dodger. However, the boat returned right away to Sweden and arrived in Trelleborg. A sailor who had read about my case and let me have his razor to shave off my prison beard, scanned the landing site and said that everything was okay on land. He was mistaken. As soon as I jumped ship, half a dozen flashlights were pointed at me. The policemen took me to the village jail and the next day I was aboard ship again. I was now extradited to the German authorities. After a short hearing and a telephone call to my parents I was set free. The German Republic did not prosecute draft-dodgers of the Empire.



### *Chapter 3*

1920:

## **Soviet Russia—The Degenerated Revolution**

Like the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, the Russian Revolution was the world-shaking event of the second decade of the twentieth century. It was a great passion that swept us all along. In the east, we believed, the sun of freedom was rising. We hoped that the prophecies of the socialists would become reality. Capitalism, the curse of the world, would be destroyed and with it oppression and exploitation. Socialism, the hoped-for society of freedom, well-being and social happiness, was in the making: "Hands off Soviet Russia. No intervention in the land of the revolution and developing socialism!" we shouted to the rulers of the world. We set out to defend enthusiastically the country which first unfurled the banner of the revolution.

In the course of two years, events took a disquieting turn. The fight among the revolutionary factions ended with the Bolsheviks as victors and absolute rulers. In his book, *State and Revolution* (1917), Lenin declared, "On the way to socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat is the unavoidable transition period for the annihilation of the foes of the revolution." Unfortunately it turned out that this dictatorship was not directed only against the opponents but also against the champions of revolution who held different opinions about the ways to arrive at it than he and his fellow members had.

In a pamphlet, published in 1919 in Sweden, *Dictatur och*



*Socialism* (Dictatorship and Socialism), I analyzed these problems from the point of view of a libertarian socialist. I spoke out for socialism and against dictatorships. However, it was clear to me that a realistic evaluation of the Russian Revolution is impossible without firsthand knowledge of the situation in Russia. Therefore I decided to make a trip to the land of the controversial revolution. I went with a mandate and as a delegate of the Free Workers Union of Germany (Anarchosyndicalist) or FAUD. The organizational preparations for the trip were not particularly difficult. After a lecture I gave in Stettin, the secretary of the Federation of Sailors, Otto Rieger, managed to get me a place on a boat that brought Russian prisoners of war back to Russia and German civilians and prisoners of war in turn back to Germany. We took along the Australian union leader Paul Freeman who came to us from his far away country and needed help to get to Russia.

The others at our table on board ship came later into prominence. There was the German economist Alfons Goldschmidt, who was commissioned by Karl Radek to write two books about his experience in the Soviet Union, and Michael Borodin, the godfather of the Communist Party of China. The third, Nikolaus Scheinin, born in Vienna as a son of Russian emigres, was Stalin's deputy judge at the trial of Goering in Nuremberg.

Our wish to join the May Day celebration in the city of Petrograd, today's Leningrad, was not fulfilled. Our boat arrived in Reval (now Tallin), capital of Estonia, the night before May 1. Under normal circumstances, Petrograd was only a few hours' train ride away. It took us an entire day to get there. Coal was unavailable and the train had to make several stops to load wood for the locomotive. All of the passengers lent a hand with the loading. By the time we arrived in Petrograd the festivities were all over.

The next day I visited Victor Serge, whom I knew from his militant anarchist days before the war under the name of Kibalchich. Now he was secretary to Zinoviev, chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. The next day I had a chance to meet Zinoviev himself. I knew that the management of factories taken over by their workers had been taken away from the shop stewards and turned over to a central administration



controlled by the state. This, in my eyes, seemed to be a degeneration of socialism. I did not hesitate to voice my consternation to the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.

Zinoviev replied, "To turn employees into owners would be tantamount to a changeover from private capitalism to collective capitalism, the capitalist system remaining. In our Putilov works, for instance, a few big shareholders would give way to a greater number of privileged, the privileges themselves remaining. This is petit-bourgeois Proudhonism. We Marxist communists want to do away with capitalism and its roots. Land, means of production, mines, commercial enterprises—in short, everything must be nationalized and the reins of state must remain in the hands of the Communist Party. This is the only way the Marxist doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat can become reality. Without it, there can be no socialism and communism."

Zinoviev's interpretation was only the polished-up face of the medal, the rugged reverse side could not yet be seen. Under Lenin's system of democratic centralism, 25,000 peasants elected one deputy to the provincial soviet and 125,000 citizens elected one deputy to the all Russian soviet. However the laws were not being made by the deputies but by the Central Committee of the party. The Politbureau nominated the People's Commissars (ministers). Not even once were free elections held after the outbreak of the revolution. At the time of the October Revolution, the Kronstadt Soviet was comprised of 105 Maximalists, 95 Bolsheviks (Lenin's party), 74 Social Revolutionaries and 12 Anarchists. After the crushing of the Kronstadt Revolt (1921) the freely elected soviet was dissolved.

Everywhere I heard the same complaints about the use of compulsion during elections to the soviets. In the beginning of 1920, the anarchist Gordin was a member of the city soviet in Moscow as a delegate of a factory crew. The highest soviet authority annulled this election. New elections were held and he was voted in again. Later on he was indicted for demagoguery and sentenced to two months in jail. He laughed bitterly when I expressed my shock about such procedures. The factory remained without a representative for the entire next legislative period.

On May 31 I came to Samara (now Kuybyshev) on the



Volga. Here I was told by a group of Left Social Revolutionaries, Maximalists and Anarcho-syndicalists that their soviet had been dissolved because the Bolsheviki did not have a majority in it. A group of Volga Germans, relishing a visitor from Germany, asked me for information about the country of their forefathers. When I told them that at home all parties and organizations, even anarchists and syndicalists were free to pursue their political activities, my companion, comrade Petrov, cut me short. One year later Petrov joined the opposition and had to leave the "fatherland of the world proletariat." He came to Berlin and we became good friends. This time, however, we had common points of view about Lenin and the Soviet state.

Some words about the origin of the soviets as I heard it in Moscow from Voline, who gives an exact description of it in his book *The Unknown Revolution*. Under the czarist regime labor unions were not permitted. During the revolution of 1905 some employees of the Putilov works and other factories in what was then St. Petersburg founded, in Voline's apartment (he was a student at that time) a committee, which was named Soviet (council). Office worker Krustlof was appointed chairman. None of the founders were members of a political party. Later the soviets became more important and, with Krustlof arrested, Leon Trotsky, belonging to the Menshevik wing of the Social Democratic Party, took over the chairmanship. After the crushing of the revolt the soviet was dissolved. Following the outbreak of the revolution of 1917, the workers of Petrograd reestablished the soviet and from then on, the soviets spread across the entire country.<sup>5</sup> The institution of soviets prevailed. The state emerging from this revolution was then called Soviet Union. The practice of the soviets is illustrated by an account given in the form of a resolution of the Congress of Anarchists held from September 3 through 8, 1919 in Kharkov:

In the beginning we had great confidence in soviet power but in the course of two years the new machinery of the state choked off the revolution. The rule of the bourgeoisie was replaced by the dictatorship of a party representing a small part of the proletariat and people. In the hands of Lenin's party the soviet system became an instrument of despotism, disregarding the will of the people. The revolution lost the creative power which alone would



have made it possible to solve the multitude of problems inherent in the buildup of a new social order. The soviet power should be a lesson and a warning for the workers of all countries. The conference proposed to the comrades the boycott of the soviets subordinated to the government and encouraged them instead to devote themselves entirely to the interests of the working people.<sup>6</sup>

In Russia, a sad state of disintegration took place. Instead of a unified workers' body politic, we were confronted with a distinct division into rulers and ruled, rulers and subjects. The right of workers and peasants to freely elect their soviets had become a fiction. There were no freely elected delegates in the unions nor in the peasant assemblies. Everything was being manipulated by the party. A giant net of espionage was set up. Under the pretext of combatting counter-revolution, the party created special committees to watch the entire population. The press was being muzzled and nobody dared to express themselves freely, neither in the streets nor in meetings or at work. In the streets there was the Cheka,<sup>7</sup> in the apartment buildings the house committees (*Domkom*), in the factories the factory committees (*Fabkom*) and, far away from the people sat the council of people's commissars (*Sovnarkom*) which had the backing of a strong army.

So it was in 1920 and so it is in 1976. Already at that time, one spoke of the "Soviet man" in contrast to the pre-revolutionary "Russian man." During my half-year's stay in Russia, I could not detect any specific features in the "Soviet man's" attitude and behavior that cannot be found in peoples of all other countries. The Russians reacted to challenges in the same manner as human beings elsewhere. Penury and food shortages were the elemental problems of the Muscovites. Everybody tried to augment his little rations by all, albeit illegal, means. The workers in nationalized bakeries "organized" dough, from which their wives baked rolls at home to be sold to the Sucharewska, the central food market. But the party elite, high officials, bureaucrats and we, delegates from foreign countries, had special privileges which we did not ask for or want. The daily ration of twenty cigarettes to which I was entitled remained untouched. As a non-smoker I turned them over to Russian friends. Quite a few slices of buttered bread were given into the outstretched hands of beggars posted in front of the hotel Delawoy Dwor.



Any pangs of conscience on my part were alleviated by the knowledge that I had many accomplices among the foreign hotel guests.

The enormous difficulties of securing adequate food and other supplies were officially ascribed to the general situation, the heritage of the past, the destruction caused by the war, the resistance of capitalist elements, the backwardness of the masses and, last but not least, to the boycott by the capitalist world. All this was true, and yet it was not the total truth. We, foreigners, friends of the Russian people, were, to begin with, not in a position to openly criticize the economic policy of the host country. But we were well aware of the criticism expressed by officials in high positions. Zinoviev castigated the mismanagement in a party meeting. He told of the complaints of the inhabitants of Petrograd about the lack of fresh fish, a lack, according to his opinion, entirely due to red tape.

He said: "When fishermen come into port with their catch, the fish are first registered, then salt is strewn on their tails. After this a search is begun for packing and shipping facilities. After this again the search for transportation gets under way and, since nobody does anything without the consent of the government, the fish rot before being shipped."

Unfortunately my hopes for a trip to the territory controlled by Nestor Makhno were dashed. Ten years before Stalin's forced collectivization the land of the smallholders was left untouched. Nevertheless they complained of the high levees they had to pay and of the lack of consumer goods manufactured in the cities. They did not seem to want any part of communism. In Poltava a pun, ridiculing fundamental communist tenets made the rounds: "Upon the question *Komu* (whom) the answer is an ironic *Nash* (us) with the twinkling of an eye," referring to the leatherjackets who came to collect the tithe and often more, all in the name of the communist government.

In Ekaterinoslav another subtle peasant joke was told. An agitator, explaining to the peasants the fundamentals of communism, asked one of them, "If you had two horses and your neighbor none, would it not be just to share them with him?" "Why not!" was the answer. "If you had two cows, would you not give him one?" "I would!" "Now, if you had two



pigs, you would certainly give him one, would you not?" "No!" replied the muzhik. "How come, you were willing to share horses and cows with him but not pigs? How should I understand this?" "That's very simple," he said, "I do not own horses and cows, but I have pigs."

In an open-air meeting in Kiev, Paul Freeman and I were asked to speak. I told the audience about the latest political developments in Germany, specifically of the Kapp Putsch (March 1920) which was crushed by a general strike. Paul Freeman, however, finished his brief speech about the situation in Australia with the following statement: "Everything the capitalist class does is wrong; contrariwise, everything the working class does is right." This piece of demagogic generalization, although followed by strong applause, left me flabbergasted. Faced with political isolation during the years 1920 and 1921, the support of the international labor movement was more important to Moscow than ever. The Third International was founded, a premature baby whose head was in Moscow, but there was no body in the non-Russian world. Communist parties did not exist elsewhere. The left wing international labor movement consisted of syndicalists and anarchists whose favor Lenin courted.

The Second Congress of the Communist International was held in the summer of 1920 in Moscow. Attending were delegates of syndicalist organizations from France, Italy, Spain and other countries and the author of this book as German representative. Truly, we were in the wrong place, for according to the bylaws of the Comintern, it was an international of political (Communist) parties. The syndicalists, however, rejected political parties as instruments for the attainment of power. Their organizational bodies were the unions (syndicates). We were in full agreement with the Communists about the necessity of defending the Russian Revolution, which, so we believed, liquidated capitalism and was about to build a free socialist order. After the revolution in the western part of Europe, which we held to be near, we wanted to achieve socialism in our own way.

The Russians proposed the establishment of a "Red Union International" (RGI) which should include also the Communist opposition groups of the reformist unions, along with the Russian Federation of Unions and the syndicalist organi-



zations. The syndicalists approved of this plan in principle but requested organizational and strategic autonomy for their international. Lenin and his party on the other hand wanted an organization ideologically and administratively subordinated to the Kremlin and controlled in every country by Communists. These two points of view appeared to be incompatible. Not only the French, German, Spanish and American syndicates spoke out against Communist supremacy in the international labor movement, but also the delegates of the British shop stewards and later the syndicalist organizations of Italy, Holland, Sweden and Argentina. Even Otto Ruehle, the delegate of the Communist opposition (KAP) party of Germany, who was at that time in Moscow, considered the bid for leadership of the Communist International as going too far. He could not come to an agreement with Lenin, shunned further sessions of the congress and soon afterwards left Russia. I stayed on until the end of September 1920.

The following years, the split between the syndicalists and the Communists in Bolshevik Russia deepened. Revolutionaries who dared criticize the policy of the ruling Communist Party, or were active in Social Revolutionary or Social Democratic opposition groups, were arrested. After the death of Kropotkin on February 8 only an energetic and determined intervention succeeded in obtaining permission for imprisoned anarchists to attend the funeral of their beloved leader and teacher.

During the Third Congress of the Communist International, French and Spanish delegates urged Trotsky to free the imprisoned Social Revolutionaries and anarchists. The conference was held July 23, 1921 in Moscow. Trotsky's reply was: "All anarchists are scoundrels and criminals; none of them can be released." When the French delegate Gaston Leval asked for evidence against them, Trotsky answered: "Who are you, Leval? I do not know you and I do not owe you any explanation." He took the Spanish delegate Arlandes who was a Communist fellow-traveler and also a member of the syndicalist union aside and said to him abruptly: "I as people's commissar am not accountable to you! My word must suffice. The delegates of the International Union Congress have no right to request the release of counter-revolutionary bandits. We in Russia are alone responsible for our



actions and what we do is in the interest of the revolution whence we have the power.”<sup>8</sup> The Spanish syndicalists, of course, did not join the Red Union International.

### Lenin Wishes to Cure Me from My “Infantile Disorder”

One day I was told, to my great surprise, in the office of the Comintern, that Lenin wanted to see me. As an avowed antiauthoritarian, rejecting any cult of personality, I received the news with utter calm and only asked why he wanted to talk to me. Our conversation in the Kremlin provided the answer. As a syndicalist at the congress I was against parliamentarism which placed me ideologically near to the KAP. Lenin considered this tendency to be an “Infantile Disorder of Communism.” To this topic he gave a great deal of thought at that time. He wanted to hear my opinion and at the same time cure me from my “Infantile Disorder.” He was fifty and I was twenty-eight years old.

We were taken by automobile from our hotel and I sat next to the chauffeur. During the ride I playfully took one knob from the dashboard and promptly burnt one finger. It was a cigar lighter, a rare luxury at that time. No wonder, the previous owner of this automobile was the czar, so the driver told me. The guard at the Kremlin wall knew Lenin’s car and the chauffeur too; nevertheless he had to check by telephone as to whether we were really expected before giving us the signal to move ahead. Was this byzantinism or fear of a counterrevolutionary assault? Maybe both.

Out of respect for Freeman, who came with me, our conversation was held in English which Lenin was not as adept in as he was in German. He pronounced the ‘h’ gutturally like the Russian ‘ch.’ We did not need to ask questions; it was Lenin who determined the topic of the conversation. I could not use shorthand but soon after our return to the hotel, I jotted down notes of this meeting.

In a very impressive manner Lenin gave us a lecture, explaining to us the ABCs of Communism. He explained and emphasized—with a taunting remark about syndicalism—the necessity of conquering political power. In the transition period, on the road to communism, the dictatorship of the proletariat is a “condition *sine qua non*” and to this effect a centrally organized Communist Party is essential. In the



impending struggle against capitalism and imperialism, the Communists will have to work also with national revolutionaries. Isolated actions are like an infantile disorder that has to be overcome.

I interrupted his soliloquy. "In a revolution, direct actions are decisive and not parliamentary babble; this is clearly demonstrated by the Russian Revolution." Lenin: "Correct, but after victory the proletariat needs a centralized power organization, a proletarian state for the suppression of the counterrevolution and for the education of workers and peasants in Marxism." Paul Freeman, thinking in categories of the syndicalist IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) asked whether the Russian workers were mature enough for a successful social revolution. Lenin: "All our efforts are geared to this goal—the soviet system plus electrification equals Communism." This then was his often-quoted slogan. I could not help asking about the attitude of the Communist Party towards anarchists. Lenin's answer was no surprise: "In the first phase of the revolution," he replied, "the anarchists are very useful, even of inestimable value. When, however, in the second phase they do not recognize the revolutionary state power, they have to be considered counterrevolutionaries."

This twenty minute conversation confirmed what I knew already of and about Lenin. His philosophy, clearly expressed in his pamphlet *State and Revolution*, evolved exclusively around Marxist categories. He quoted Karl Marx to me several times. All philosophers, writers, the historical events of all times—in short everything was seen by him under the aspects of dogmatic Marxism.

What remains, I asked Freeman afterwards, if you take the Marxist train of thought out of his thinking, endeavors and actions? Without the victory of the workers of Petrograd and the sailors of Kronstadt in October 1917, Lenin would not be in the Kremlin today. "You are a skeptic and a heretic," replied Paul, when I told him of my impressions. I was no skeptic indeed but I saw Lenin with the critical eyes of a libertarian socialist. And I expected more than a replacement of a czarist autocracy by an authoritarian party dictatorship à la Robespierre.

The revolution had broken out three years before. The czar was dead; the czarist system of oppression eliminated;



the revolution was in its constructive stage and the build-up of socialism had begun. The people should have been given the chance to deploy their creative powers in liberty. Every grouping should have had the right to establish free collective enterprises or cooperatives. Yet what did we observe? Those who came out libertarian socialist were subjected to persecutions, their publications and meetings forbidden. The Cheka, successor to the infamous Okhrana, the hated czarist secret police, were harassing Mensheviks, Social Democrats, rightist and leftist Social Revolutionaries, Maximalists, syndicalists and anarchists, although all of them fought czarism and were for the revolution. Paul Freeman, who later became a defender of the Leninist soviet power, replied: "Let them go to hell." This was the end of our dialogue. Lenin bore the main responsibility for this developmental degeneration of the revolution.

### From Persecution to Mass Terror

Political friends in Russia reported to me the abuses of the Cheka and organized mass terror. I received first-hand information from Isaak Nachman Steinberg, Left Social Revolutionary and People's Commissar of the Department of Justice, member of the only coalition government after the October Revolution,<sup>9</sup> revealing another side to Lenin than the usual panegyric. What Steinberg told me was later described in detail in several of his books.<sup>10</sup> In his book *In the Workshop of the Revolution* he gives a description of a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars in Petrograd Feb, 21, 1918:

The discussion centered about a proclamation drafted by Trotsky: "The Fatherland Is in Danger," which said among other things: "Whoever opposes the revolutionary government should be annihilated on the spot." I declared that this brutal threat deprives the proclamation of its pathetic character. "To the contrary," replied Lenin, "it embodies the entire revolutionary fervor." When he further defended terror in the name of revolutionary justice, I exclaimed indignantly that in that case there is no need for a Department of Justice; it should be called simply a commissariat for the extinction of political opponents. Lenin retorted: "That should really be its name but we cannot openly say it." (p. 145)

His words were soon followed by corresponding actions. After the conclusion of the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk on



March 3, 1918 (between revolutionary Russia and imperial Germany) the Left Social Revolutionaries left the government. The Communist Party led by Lenin now held absolute power. Simultaneously there began a series of reckless persecutions of social revolutionaries of all shades. In August 1918 Lenin wired to the city soviet of Nizhniy Novgorod:

White guards are preparing an insurrection in Nizhniy Novgorod. You must mobilize all forces, set up a triumvirate of dictators and resort to mass terror. Shoot and/or deport hundreds of prostitutes who treat officers and soldiers with vodka. Do not hesitate, act fast. Start mass searches and executions wherever arms are found. Order also mass deportations of Mensheviks and their allies.<sup>11</sup>

Accelerating mass terror from above resulted in increasing restlessness below. On August 30, 1918, the director of the Petrograd Cheka, Uritsky, was assassinated. At the same time Dora Kaplan, a Moscow milliner, tried to kill Lenin. The would-be assassin who had survived persecution as a Social Revolutionary under the czarist regime and had been liberated by the revolution, was apprehended and executed in short order. Lenin escaped with only slight injuries. The Cheka reaction was the shooting of hostages. The official Cheka Bulletin No. 6 of 1918 reported the shooting of 512 hostages in Petrograd, 15 in Moscow, and somewhat later of another 90. In Nizhniy Novgorod 46 hostages were executed. The shooting continued in all parts of the country. Noted representatives of the Russian intelligentsia were incensed by this mass terror. A heated discussion between Lenin and Maxim Gorki, who strongly condemned the executions, ended their long years of friendship.<sup>12</sup> Also Kropotkin sent a strongly worded letter of protest to Lenin. All these protests, however, were of no avail. Lenin's words: "No revolution without shooting," remained the leitmotif of his successor Stalin. It should be made clear that the father of mass terror for securing Communist sovereignty is V. I. Lenin.

Freedom of thought was also drastically curtailed. The Commission of Cultural Affairs under the leadership of Lenin's wife Krupskaya, cleansed libraries of non-revolutionary works. With Lenin's consent, works of Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer, Ruskin, Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Ljescow were removed from the shelves of public libraries.<sup>13</sup>



### A Visit with Peter Kropotkin

At last I should have an opportunity to meet in person the grand old man whose writings meant so much to me and about whose goodness of heart and charisma friends who had met him before had told me. The visit with Peter Kropotkin was the highlight of my half-year's stay in Russia. I took along his book *Ideals and Reality in the Russian Literature*, intending to deepen my knowledge of this topic during my five-day stay at his modest house at Dmitrov near Moscow. The reception was cordial, even before I handed him Rudolf Rocker's letter of introduction.

What a contrast between Kropotkin's warm humanism and the cold, power-conscious Lenin! The conversation with Kropotkin turned on the problems of the revolution and had very human traits. Sitting near the humming samovar, the old man told me about his German lessons in the ducal palace of his parents. Belying his 79 years, he still remembered the words of Goethe's "Erlkoenig" (Elf-king). He rose and, walking up and down the floor, recited in fluent German: "Wer reitet so spaet durch Nacht und Wind? Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind" (Who's riding so late through the night so wild? It is the father and his child). I had the impression of having the living Elf-king before me.

We were mostly concerned, however, with the fate of the Russian Revolution. Peter Alexandrovitch complained bitterly about the power concentration of the Communist Party and its dictatorial government system. There were no more free soviets. In this little town of Dmitrov, only the crews of the few existing plants had the right to send delegates to the local soviet, and by manipulated elections at that. He himself had no possibility of participating in discussions of public affairs, neither in a deciding nor in an advisory capacity. He said, furthermore, that Russia needed autonomous communal counselors in free communal soviets who formed in their sections federations for mutual benefit. Free alliances of independent local units (communities) were more likely to solve the problems common to all than a state centralized administrative body. This is specifically apparent at times of crop failure, when food shortages arise. He proposed to Lenin the formation of free federations of cantonal assemblies. But



his suggestions were turned down. Lenin contended that the objectives of communists and anarchists are the same in the long run, yet his opinions were different.

Under the present political structure, the power of the state, far from being decreased, is actually reinforced. If this trend continues, Russia will ever more renounce the original objectives, namely Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. This ideal should have been the prime achievement of the Russian Revolution, after almost a century of development of socialist movements. Unfortunately, the Russian people shook off the fetters of czarism only to be put into another straitjacket by the Communist Party.

When I took leave of him, his wife Sophie and daughter Sascha, he said to me: "I have the feeling that we shall remain friends!" Five months later he died, shortly before his eightieth birthday. His idea of a federation of free communes and free cities in place of a gigantic state ruled by the Kremlin autocracy did not become reality.

Several months before his death Kropotkin laid down in a letter to the workers of Western Europe his evaluation of the Russian Revolution.<sup>14</sup> Among other recommendations he pleaded for the opening of diplomatic relations between the western countries and revolutionary Russia, a request which, as he put it, should be promoted by workers and by all progressive elements in the west. Furthermore he said in this letter:

In the light of our present economic and political situation, the Russian Revolution should be considered to be a sequel to the great revolutions of England and France. Russia however, attempts to go a step further where France stopped short when she tried to establish what was then called the real equality (*égalité de fait*), namely the economic equality. Alas! In Russia this step has been taken by a strongly centralized dictatorship of one party—the Social Democratic Maximalist—according to the guidelines of the centralist and jacobin conspiracy of Babeuf.<sup>14</sup> I feel it is my duty to tell you that, in my opinion, the attempt to create a Communist Republic by a centralist State Communism and the iron dictatorship of one party is doomed to failure. We should learn from the present situation in Russia: how the build-up of communism should not be approached even though the people, demoralized by the old regime, did not oppose the new experiment.

It is amazing how clearly this old theoretician has foreseen



developments! The world has since undergone significant transformations. Under the impact of the second industrial revolution, social relations appear in a new perspective. Yet Kropotkin's fundamental concept of a social renewal and a free society are still as valid today as they were fifty-six years ago. The international labor movement can only learn one lesson from the Russian Revolution and this is: how not to act if well-being and liberty for all is the objective. This is Kropotkin's testament for the coming generations.

### THE LAND OF THE REVOLUTION BANISHES REVOLUTIONARIES

In October 1920 I was back home from Russia and stayed for a time as subtenant in the apartment of a friend, Franz Barwich, in Berlin-Steglitz. Barwich was treasurer of the FAUD, Freie Arbeiterunion Deutschlands (Free Workers' Union of Germany), the anarcho-syndicalist union. His nine-year-old son Heinz was eagerly listening when I told the small family circle of my experiences in Russia. The son later became a nuclear scientist in the Soviet Union and, after the Second World War was awarded the Stalin Prize. He was also director of the Nuclear Research Institute of the DDR (German Democratic Republic) in Rossendorf near Dresden. After attending a nuclear energy exhibit in New York in 1965 he decided not to return to the DDR. A year later he died at the age of 54 in Cologne. His book, *The Red Atom*, published posthumously, is a valuable contribution to the critique of Stalinism.

In the early 1920s, the left radicals in the German labor movement believed that the Russian Revolution would eventually spread over the entire world. They did not question whether the economic, spiritual and political postulates for a revolution in Western Europe and America actually were given. They were convinced that revolution was inevitable. Did not Karl Marx predict it? There was no uniform concept of the structure of a postrevolutionary social order among the socialist factions. The Communists, loyal to Moscow and the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx, regarded the Russian model as the prototype. The Social Democrats, on the other hand—with a bow to the older Marx—thought that the time



had not yet come for socialism to be a reality. For us non-Marxist leftists, this discussion was nothing but shadowboxing with as little substance as the question of the believers about whether Christ today would belong to the Greek Orthodox or the Roman Catholic church. We syndicalists were in favor of a new social order. However, we rejected any dictatorship, even the proletarian one. My personal experience in Russia convinced me that social emancipation (for the past century the objective of all socialist schools and movements) cannot be achieved by dictatorial means. This is my innermost belief which I expounded in many syndicalist meetings with reference to the Russian experiment. The large crowds attending these meetings were proof of the keen interest in the Russian Revolution.

The crushing of the Kronstadt insurrection<sup>16</sup> was followed by a wave of terror. All those who refused to submit to the dictatorial rule of Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades were arrested and subjected to all kinds of harassment. The right of assembly and coalition was abolished; likewise freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Freedom of movement throughout the entire country was severely restricted. Permission to travel abroad was given only to internationally well-known Social Democrats and anarchists only to avoid adverse publicity embarrassing to the regime. Like czarist Russia before, communist Russia now became a country of emigration for freedom fighters. But the number of those obtaining exit visas was minimal in comparison to the masses that had to stay. The first stage for emigrants was Berlin. To Berlin came Mensheviks, Social Democrats of the left and the right, Social Revolutionaries, syndicalists, anarchists and followers of the Communist workers' opposition.

The best known were Abramovitch, Dan, Martov, Steinberg, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Alexander Schapiro, Peter Arshinov, Voline, and later came Nestor Makhno. From these émigrés we got the latest news on persecution of revolutionaries in Russia. I published this information in the weekly *The Syndicalist*, of which I was editor. G. P. Maximoff wrote a voluminous book about political persecution under Lenin and Stalin.<sup>17</sup> This book was published in Chicago.

Among the many documents regarding the terror of these



years I want to single out one letter, written by political prisoners detained in the prison of Wladimir, dated April 30, 1921:

To the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Province  
Wladimir

The All Russian Central Executive Committee

The People's Commissariat of Public Health

The People's Commissariat of Justice

The People's Commissariat for Workers and Peasant Inspection:

We, Social Democrats, Social Revolutionaries and Anarchists, detained in the prison of Wladimir want to direct your attention to the unsanitary conditions under which we suffer in this prison.

1) Many of us have been dragged from prison to prison in the course of long years of revolutionary activity [during the czarist regime] but nowhere else have we seen such incredible conditions as we found here.

2) The latrines are locked. Until recently the prisoners had to use the courtyard as toilet. Ten days ago two ditches were dug in the middle of the yard but without superstructures; soon the ditches were full and emitted an unbearable stench.

3) As a result of seeping sewage from the ditches the drinking water of the nearby fountain will soon be contaminated. Furthermore the fountain itself is an open hole into which dust and dirt are blown by the wind.

4) There are no washing facilities. Washing up at the fountain is only possible if one prisoner pours water into the hands of another (provided there is water at all). The courtyard is full of soapy and dirty water.

5) The food ration is one pound (450 gram) of bread daily. The main meal consists of muddy water with a little cabbage in it and rotten potatoes without a trace of fat. Once in a while but very rarely we get three grams of sugar.

6) There are no lamps in the cells and we are without light.

7) Washing and bathing facilities do not work; for laundering we have neither soap nor water; the infirmary, where ten men are already laid up suffering from typhoid fever, lacks water and the most necessary medicaments. The secret police (Cheka) has sent us, Social Democrats, Social Revolutionaries and Anarchists, to this prison (a disgrace to the penal system of the Soviet Union) with the intent to have us meet a slow and painful death by exhaustion and disease.

We strongly protest against these barbarous methods, which will not change our revolutionary convictions for which many of us fought under the czar more than ten and fifteen years.

Wladimir, April 30, 1921

This protest was signed by 55 Social Democrats, 7 Social



Revolutionaries and 3 anarchists. We called upon the Soviet government in the name of socialism to free the imprisoned Social Democrats, Social Revolutionaries and anarchists. Since there was no response, we arranged public protest meetings and castigated in our press the reactionary tendency apparent in the Russian Revolution and specifically the autocracy of the Communist Party. We felt that these persecutions were an insult to the international labor movement.

Did we really have the right to fight against reactionary governments when in the land of the socialist labor movement, where Communists came to power, socialist fighters were persecuted, imprisoned, humiliated, deported to Siberia and even shot to death?

We still spoke of Lenin as *tovarish* (comrade) and addressed Communists in the familiar "Du" (thou) and used the *terminus familiaris* "Genosse" (comrade), still believed in the philosophical bond and world view of all factions of the labor movement, still saw in the socialist creed the ideological tie that unites us all, and in capitalism the common bourgeois enemy. My sympathies were still with Mother Russia and I hoped that in the country of Bakunin, Dostoevski, Tolstoy and Kropotkin, socialism would eventually win. How could I, indeed how could we all, surmise that the despotism initiated by Lenin would endure more than half a century—and who knows how much longer—and keep the Russian people subdued? Fifty-five years after my visit to Russia this joke makes the round there:

Brezhnev had died and come to the underworld, where he met the last czar, Nicholas II. "How are things up there?" the latter asked. "Is Russia still a world power?" Brezhnev: "Yes, of course." Nicholas: "Has the country still its glorious army?" Brezhnev: "Certainly." Nicholas: "And its glorious navy?" Brezhnev: "The navy is mightier than at your time." Nicholas: "Does the country still extend from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean?" Brezhnev: "Naturally." Nicholas: "Has the secret police still a stranglehold on the people?" Brezhnev: "Yes sir." Nicholas: "Are political opponents still sent to Siberia?" Brezhnev: "That too." Nicholas: "Do my people still drink vodka?" Brezhnev: "As ever." Nicholas: "Has the vodka still 38 percent alcohol?" Brezhnev: "No, now it has 40 percent." Nicholas: "Listen, was it really worthwhile to make a revolution for just 2 percent?"



## *Chapter 4*

1921:

### **France—In the Land of the Paris Commune**

A ceremony in Berlin in 1911 commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Paris Commune ended with the song: "Neither master nor servant is the slogan from place to place, liberty, rights of man for the human race! Many already exclaim keenly: *Vive la Commune!*" Then and there I decided to study the social movements in the motherland of modern social theories.

Personal circumstances and above all the outbreak of World War I and its consequences compelled me to postpone the trip. At last in 1921 I could make it. In February 1921 I left for Paris. On May 20 I joined the march to the "Wall of the Federated" (Mur des Fédérés) in the Père Lachaise cemetery. This memorial march is held every year in memory of the dead fighters of the Paris Commune. This was the fiftieth anniversary and the celebration was more elaborate than usual, for the Commune is considered to be the most important event in the history of the international labor movement of the past century.

In March 1871 men and women, inspired by their socialist creed, wanted to put an end to the national misery caused by a lost war. They proclaimed a free commune in the city of Paris. In Lyon and other French cities there were similar upheavals for the purpose of setting up an intrinsically autonomous commune as part of a federation of communes that should replace the centralist national state of France. The



activists for this national rebirth called themselves Communards. The guillotine, symbol of Robespierre's terror during the revolution of 1789, was taken from the museum and publicly burnt as a disgrace to the nation. The column on Place Vendome memorializing Napoleonic victories was tumbled as a symbol of militarism. But the Commune did more than that: the top salaries of high government officials were reduced, night work of the bakery workers was abolished and a decree was promulgated for the separation of church and state; as a result there were no more classes in religion in the elementary schools. Furthermore, preparations were made to convert private enterprises into cooperatives. All this was thought to be the beginning of a reform which would culminate in a social regeneration.

Conservative forces, however, moved in to overthrow the Commune by all means, even bloodshed, and they succeeded. On May 20 thousands of Communards were shot to death at the wall of Père Lachaise cemetery, many hundreds were sentenced to long prison terms and deportation. The reforms initiated by the Commune were declared null and void.

The period of reaction following the collapse of the Commune lasted more than a decade. Progress however, could not be permanently blocked. In December 1905 the separation of church and state was definitely decreed. Since then there have been no more church taxes nor classes in religion in the elementary schools in France.

During the first weeks of my sojourn in Paris, I stayed with a political friend temporarily. He was Morin, a master shoemaker who lived not far from the cemetery Père Lachaise. Mimi, his daughter, at later date married Buenaventura Duruti. When I visited the Morins a few days after I moved to other quarters, Mrs. Morin told me that, early the same morning two policemen had come to apprehend me. Why? I had not committed any crime, did not possess arms, had no part in any conspiracy, loved the French people and wished them well. Why now should I be wanted by the police? Ah, maybe because at a public meeting I sang with the crowd a brisk revolutionary hit song ending with the words: "Par la raison et par l'action, debout, partout révolution" (Through reason and action stand up, everywhere révolution). In the preceding discussion I embraced the idea of the famous French



geographer Elisée Réclus expressed in the pamphlet *Evolution and Revolution*: "Revolution and evolution are two consecutive acts of the same phenomenon: the first precedes the revolution which is the preliminary of a new development, the mother of new upheavals."

Pondering about all the possibilities of this mystery, I could find no plausible explanation. Could some stool pigeon, to earn a few francs pocket money, have informed on a young foreigner who went to extreme leftist meetings and whose name appeared once in a while in newspapers? It appears that I was not thought to be a dangerous element and I did not feel I was being shadowed, although I continued to go to meetings and also wrote from time to time articles for the libertarian socialist press.

One year later I found the solution to this riddle. I was back in Germany and applied for a visa to enter France. The French Consulate turned my application down on the grounds that I had been expelled from France. Expelled in absence? This was, after Sweden, Norway and Denmark, my fourth expulsion. Later on a fifth would follow. In 1933 I came to France unmolested as a fugitive from Hitler and the expulsion order was revoked.

It is not surprising that in the motherland of socialist theories, socialist organizations were used as stepping stones for cabinet posts, especially by lawyers. In 1885 the lawyer Millerand was elected to parliament as a candidate of the Socialists. After several terms in the cabinet he quit the party. The lawyer Aristide Briand wrote a brochure in defense of the general strike in his younger years. When he, also a candidate for the Socialists, was voted into parliament, he switched parties and became a cabinet member. But he was not the worst. He and Streseman, German minister for foreign affairs, concluded the French-German Pact of Locarno. For this achievement he was awarded the Nobel prize for peace. The lawyer Pierre Laval entered parliament as a Socialist and later became prime minister. When he came to terms with Hitler as a collaborator, he was shunned by French patriots. After the collapse of the Hitler Reich he was sentenced to death and executed. Characteristic for French political behavior is the adage: "At age 20, Anarchist; at 30 Socialist; at 40 Democrat; at 50 Liberal; and at age 60 Conservative." The



undermining of Socialist thought by "ministerialism" contributed greatly to discrediting the Socialist Party and served as a battering ram for the Communists. The Socialist daily *L'Humanité*, founded by Jean Jaurès, was taken over by the Communists. To be sure, Léon Blum, Paul Fauré and other militants remained faithful to the party. Marcel Cachin on the other hand (whom I met in Moscow in 1920) left the party and was cofounder of the Communist Party of France, which soon surpassed the mother party in strength.

While in Paris I went to meetings of both parties just to keep abreast of events, without intent to join either. Of the anarchist veterans of the past century very few were still alive. Jean Grave, successor to Kropotkin as editor of *Revolte* (*Temps Nouveaux*), old and retired, living in a suburb of Paris told me about the struggles of past decades and particularly of Louise Michel, "the red virgin," as she was called in the vernacular, who was deported to New Caledonia for her activities during the Commune. After her return she resumed her struggle against social injustice with renewed vigor. I had long discussions with the Dutch economist Christian Cornelissen, a liberal socialist, about one topic in particular: Will abolition of private property and socialization of the means of production eliminate exploitation? Will the socialist economy—every one according to his needs instead of the capitalist profit economy—bring about social justice? In the light of my impressions gathered in Russia the previous year, I was skeptical. I did not believe any more that socialization or nationalization in the form of state ownership would result in social justice. Cornelissen, who analyzed the economic problems based on need and the theory of value, agreed with me. We were in agreement that the nationalization of the means of production alone would not eliminate exploitation and that an economy of need based on state planning would not put an end to social inequality. In pre-industrial society it was possible to introduce into small communities the economy of pure distribution. Under the conditions of the modern industrial society however and in view of the global economic interdependence, the exchange of goods necessitates value determination, that is prices and also wages. Seen as a whole: even in a socialist society it will not be possible to avoid the wage system entirely, and if social justice is a measure, the



wage system is not an evil per se. Cornelissen thought that working hours as the only value determinant is unrealistic. Experience shows that lack of raw material, rarity of quality differences of consumer goods, highly qualified services, etc. are equally vague determinants. These factors will not change in a socialist economy.

The qualitative purchase value supplements the quantitative labor value. An epoch of a universal society of abundance, relinquishing prices and wages was not excluded from our conversation but we did not want to burden coming generations with a theoretical hypothesis.

### REVOLUTIONARIES IN FRANCE

I visited Han Ryner, the philosopher, novelist, playwright and essayist, in his apartment on the right bank of the Seine. He is a libertarian interpreter of Greek philosophers and I translated his novel *Les Pacifiques* which I published under the title *Nelti*. In his coarse worker's frock, his face surrounded by a long beard, he reminded me of the old, wise man in Greece even when one has not read his book *Socrates' True Discourses*. His history of individualism in antiquity is a valuable supplement to pertinent textbooks, and those who wish to read Diogenes and Epictetus in their proper context will have to resort to the writings of Han Ryner. In his *Fifth Gospel* he castigates war and modern barbarism. In all his writings, whatever the topic, he defends freedom and the rights and dignity of men. A profound expert on history, he knew well that in the life of nations there are episodes when a people confronted with brutal aggression has to counter with force. Thus, although essentially a pacifist, he sided with the victims of aggression during the Spanish Civil War, when the military clique under Franco's leadership attacked the Spanish people. He died at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and his friends and admirers in many lands memorialized his spiritual heritage in a quarterly, *Cahiers des Amis de Han Ryner*.

Another of my Paris acquaintances was the brilliant orator of the libertarian movement, Sébastien Faure. His latin exuberance always brought him an enthusiastic audience. His speeches frequently ended with the popular song "At the



Time of Cherry Blossoms." He replaced the word "cherry" (*cerises*) by *l'anarchie*. He was not the only one to underscore his orations musically. De Gaulle also frequently concluded his speeches by singing the "Marseillaise." Sébastien Faure was famous also outside of France for his four-volume *Encyclopedia of Anarchism*, and *Mon Communisme*. By "Communism" however, was meant a community similar to that of the Doukhobors<sup>18</sup> rather than the social order of the Soviet Union. Also in Paris I met two well known Spanish revolutionaries, Andrés Nin and Joaquín Maurín. I had published reports about persecution and jailing of Spanish revolutionaries in Spain in Swedish newspapers; Swedish syndicalists collected money to help their persecuted Spanish comrades and sent it to me for transmission to Spain. I dismissed my plan to go to Spain and hand over the money because the travel expenses would have greatly reduced the amount collected. Then Andrés Nin and Joaquín Maurín arrived in Paris from Barcelona on their way to Moscow. I told them that I had money from Sweden for the benefit of their comrades and asked them to whom to send it. They showed me their papers as delegates of the Syndicalist Union Federation (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, or C N T, founded in 1911), and upon their request I did not hesitate to hand over the money to them. I requested a receipt which I subsequently sent to Stockholm. In Moscow the two embraced Soviet Communism. Soon Maurín returned to Spain; Nin remained in Moscow to become director of the Hispanic section of the Red Trade Union International. At first Leninists, they later became Trotskyists and, in 1934, founded the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (P.O.U.M.—Workers Party of Marxist Unity).

Thirty years later I saw Maurín again in New York. "I remember you very well," he said to me, "You helped us out of a jam. When we came from Barcelona to Paris we did not know where to get the money for the trip." I was flabbergasted. They were certainly—as I was—driven by the honest desire to see with their own eyes the working of the Russian Revolution. But I would never have used money earmarked for assistance to persecuted comrades for other purposes. I gave them the benefit of the doubt and thought that they had a notion that this money was meant for the CNT in



general. This was the only way I could explain the naive manner in which Maurín told me of their faux pas. I was very embarrassed and disappointed but kept my mouth shut. After all, Nin was murdered by Stalin's henchmen and Maurín was Franco's prisoner during the Spanish Civil War. But today, fifty-six years after the event, my historic conscience obliges me to lift the veil.

The French union movement was at that time split by grave controversies. The formula: that syndicalism can exist independently, coined in 1905 to counter vote getting maneuvers by political parties, led to elaboration of a syndicalist strategy toward attaining socialism. However, the influence of Communist propaganda made this stratagem questionable. The Communists strained every nerve to get into the leadership of the unions, bitterly opposed by socialists, neutral unions and anarcho-syndicalists. However, the opponents of the Communists could not find common ground and were largely disunited.

A decision regarding the future union policies was anticipated for the congress of the C.G.T. (Confédération Général du Travail) in Lille in September 1921. At this congress, which I attended as reporter for foreign newspapers, the discussions were so passionate that the anarchist and draft resister Louis Lecoin implored the delegates to calm down and not to come to blows. But even amid the turmoil and passion there were moments when French wit and humor came to the fore. Uproarious laughter erupted when a delegate, in rebuttal to the speaker before him, exclaimed: "Si ma tante en avait je l'appellerais mon oncle." Since I failed to understand this fast spoken phrase I turned to the female representative of the daily *Le Temps* for an explanation. She laughed and told me to ask a male colleague. No wonder! The translation is: "If my aunt had a cock, I would have to call her my uncle." The opposition remained in the minority, walked out on the congress and founded a new Unified Federation of Unions which was all but unified, of course. How could Leninists following the party line, traditional syndicalists and anarcho-syndicalists peacefully dwell under the same roof? Unitarism broke up when anarcho-syndicalists quit to found a third revolutionary Syndicalist Union Federation.<sup>19</sup> During my short stay in Lille I lived in the home of a



working man's family to whom Parisian friends recommended me. When I took leave and said goodbye, shaking hands with every member of the family, the housewife said to me "Mais embrassez-moi!" (kiss me). Following the French custom I kissed her and the children on both cheeks. Several years later, doing the same thing to my hosts in northern Italy they were greatly amazed. I had mixed the countries up. The lesson: Beware of generalizations.



## *Chapter 5*

### **1922-1929: Anarchists in the Weimar Republic**

In 1922 inflation in Germany reached a climax. Wages had to be paid daily because the purchase value of the paper money dropped rapidly from day to day. Purportedly there were peasants who papered the walls of their rooms with mark bills. Everybody sought to convert paper money into goods. Those who did not do it found themselves in the same situation as my aunt Anna in Berlin, who, after twenty years of hard work and thrift, got just a quarter of pound of butter for all her savings. Prophets of doom regarded this runaway inflation as a forerunner of the collapse of capitalism which will be followed by socialization. However, the devaluation of currency did not revolutionize the workers and the financial catastrophe did not germinate a revolutionary situation. The majority of the German population had only one desire: to convert the fictive nominal value of their paper money into goods, for which they hardly could be blamed, for when the mark was stabilized, one billion inflated marks were exchanged for one stabilized mark.

The Social Democrats resorted to a policy of the "possible," renouncing any revolutionary objectives; they did not actively propel the course of development but let themselves be dragged along by events. The Communists advocated revolution according to the Russian model. But the majority of the working class stuck to a "wait and see" attitude.

The political vacuum was filled by the National Socialist



movement. They wanted "revenge" for the Versailles Treaty and rearmament, a slogan that got—in the absence of anything better—an enthusiastic response from many a "German Michel." Mussolini was the prototype; Ludendorff and Hitler stood waiting at the door. We syndicalists, a minority on the left wing of the working class movement, propagated our ideas of a liberal and federalistic socialism at mass meetings and in the weekly *Syndicalist* (average circulation 80,000 copies) and by the publication of books as well as brochures. We published works by Bakunin, Kropotkin, J. H. Mackay, Domela Nieuwenhuis, Rudolf Rocker and other liberal socialists and anarchists. We also published a series of pamphlets about sex education, demanded repeal of the law punishing abortion and agitated for free birth control. We joined the "Antimilitaristic Bureau" (centered in Holland) and participated actively in the European "No More Wars" movement, which made spectacular advances in France and England. We did not attain our goal, but the much stronger Social Democrats and Communists had not accomplished much either.

### Rudolf Rocker

The spiritual head of our movement was Rudolf Rocker. Born in 1873 in Mainz, he lost his parents in his early childhood. Educated in an orphanage he became a bookbinder's apprentice and joined the socialist movement at an early age. He left Germany when the *Sozialistengesetz* (a law against socialist activities) was enacted. After a long sojourn in France, Rocker went to London, where he became active in the Jewish labor movement and was editor of the Yiddish paper *Arbeiterfreund* (friend of the working man). By his writings in Yiddish he, a gentile, contributed to the enrichment of Yiddish literature.<sup>20</sup> After the end of World War I Rocker returned to Germany. He was an extremely knowledgeable socialist theoretician—clear thinking, a brilliant speaker, honest and conciliatory. He tried to settle every dispute in an equitable and good-natured manner. Thus he was to us young followers a model worthy of imitation. Rocker had an extraordinary knowledge of the history of the international labor movement, exemplified above all by his biography of Johann Most, and, besides his writing, was an active participant on the daily struggle for betterment of



labor conditions, for which his pamphlets, *The Struggle for Daily Bread* and *Nationalization and the Working Class* are the best proof. It was he who drafted the program of the German anarcho-syndicalists. By the end of December 1922 he submitted to the International Congress of Anarcho-Syndicalists a declaration of principles pinpointing the contrasts between a libertarian socialism (anarcho-syndicalism) and the dictatorship of Communism as well as the state socialist opportunism of the Social Democrats. Rocker's most important contribution to the philosophy of history was his book—published first in English—*Nationalism and Culture* (1937), which, after World War II, was followed up by a German edition under the title *The Decision of the Occident* (after 1949 also published in Germany). Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann had high praise for this work. Rudolf Rocker died, age 84, an émigré in New York. There was a lifelong bond of friendship between us.

### Max Nettlau

I was profoundly impressed by Max Nettlau, the “Herodotus of Anarchy” as he was called by Rudolf Rocker in his biography.<sup>21</sup> Nettlau, son of a wealthy father, studied philosophy in Vienna and won his doctorate with a dissertation about the Celtic languages. Later on he devoted himself entirely to the study of anarchism. “I always busy myself with topics that interest only a few people and are financially unrewarding,” he said to me laughingly when we met in his small room in Vienna. He lost his inherited money which was put in his name in a bank account and would have secured him a carefree life under normal conditions, through a runaway inflation. Nettlau's works: *Early Spring of Anarchy*, *Anarchism from Proudhon to Kropotkin*, *Socialists and Social Revolutionaries*, *Bakunin* (three volumes), *Errico Malatesta*, *the Life of an Anarchist*, and a few minor pamphlets by the publishing house The Syndicalist. Of special importance and still timely is his brochure *Responsibility and Solidarity in the Class Struggle*, where he asked labor not to consider themselves as irresponsible tools of capitalism but to directly influence the process of production. By this pamphlet Nettlau became a pioneer for the right of co-responsibility of unions in production. The right of labor to



refuse production of harmful material made him a pioneer of the modern science of ecology.

Nettlau had very little income from his publications. When our publishing house was closed by the Nazis and the stock of books destroyed, he was left completely destitute. Also confiscated was a valuable library of the previous century, collected by the Communist Workers Educational Society (all German socialists in London). To Nettlau applies the German proverb "Wenn die Not am groessten, ist Hilfe am naechsten" (help is nearest when need is greatest). He bequeathed his library to the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, which in turn gave him for his valuable contribution a monthly stipend and the right to use its study rooms for his work. He lived in Amsterdam until his death in 1944. The Nazis left him alone. When, during World War II, the German army occupied Amsterdam, Alfred Rosenberg, the chief theoretician of the Nazis, had Nettlau's books seized for his own use, but the confusion of the war prevented the delivery. After the collapse of the German Reich the books were found crated, the crates still sealed, in a railway station in northwestern Germany, and subsequently sent back to the rightful owner, the Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

### Sacco and Vanzetti and Other Victims of Redbaiting

Nineteen twenty-seven was a year of worldwide agitation to free Sacco and Vanzetti. We in Berlin and in the rest of Germany did our utmost to obtain freedom for the two anarchists sentenced to death. Having dealt before this with political trials of American courts, I could not stand idly by this time. In 1920 I published in Stockholm a pamphlet, *Anarkist maertyrena i Chicago* (Anarchist Martyrs in Chicago), castigating a judicial murder that today is only known to few people. The execution of four anarchists sentenced to death—the fifth committed suicide—on November 11, 1887 is a tragic event in the history of the international labor movement. Those condemned—August Spies, Adolf Fischer, Georg Engel, Albert Parsons and Louis Lingg—were organizers of a demonstration of workers in favor of implementation of the eight-hour working day, which took place May 4, 1886 at the Haymarket in Chicago. When police tried to disperse the crowd a bomb exploded and killed seven policemen and four



other persons. The organizers and speakers were held responsible for the attack. Although all liberal-minded men and women at that time—among them G. B. Shaw—strongly protested against the death sentence, the alleged culprits were executed. Seven years later a commission appointed by Governor John Peter Altgeld of Illinois came to the conclusion that jury and judge were carried away by the general hysteria and red scare and committed a gross miscarriage of justice.<sup>22</sup> The gallows of Chicago became a beacon. Three years later, at an international congress of socialists in Paris, the first of May was proclaimed Labor Day. The drive for the eight-hour day could henceforth not be stopped. We owe to the Chicago anarchists the first of May as a worldwide labor day.

The second American justice scandal I dealt with in my pamphlet was the execution of the Swedish-born American worker-poet Joe Hill in Salt Lake City. He was indicted on a murder charge and sentenced without proof of guilt. In this case too the judges were influenced by the general hysteria against "criminal syndicalism." Hill had to die because his songs against exploitation incited to rebellion. Heretofore nobody had tried to bring light to this dark chapter of American juggling of justice. Hill's songs conquered the hearts of the American workers. A few years ago I heard a group of sailors at Pershing Square, Los Angeles, sing his "Workers of the World Unite" after the melody "Lieb mich und die Welt ist mein" (love me and the world is mine). A North American diplomat in a South American capital played for me in his apartment on a music box Joe Hill's most famous song. The ironic words of the revolutionary poet, "You'll get pie in the sky when you die," melodiously filled the elegant living room. Joe Hill has been vindicated by the people. Films were played in American and Swedish movie theaters portraying his heroic life and tragic death. Joe Hill was a real fighter and far from being a sentimental dreamer. Before the executioner took his life he wrote:

My will is easy to decide,  
For there is nothing to divide.  
My kin don't need to fuss and moan—  
"Moss does not cling to a rolling stone."

My body?—Oh!—If I could choose,  
I would to ashes it reduce,



And let the merry breezes blow  
My dust to where some flowers grow.  
Perhaps some fading flower then  
Would come to life and bloom again.  
This is my last and final will.  
Good luck to all of you,  
Joe Hill.

Sacco and Vanzetti—the point of departure of my historical excursion—were arrested in 1920, charged with the murder of two men and robbery of \$15,776. Although the prosecution could not present credible evidence against them they were sentenced to death amid whipped-up hysteria and red scare. What of it? They were only anarchists! The sentence was followed by an outcry of worldwide protests which made it advisable for officialdom to postpone carrying out the sentence for the time being. The to and fro lasted seven years.

In August 1927, despite all pleas for leniency, the execution date was set. Angry protest demonstrations erupted in all capitals of the western world. I wrote a brochure which was distributed in thousands of copies. A gigantic mass meeting was held in Berlin's Lustgarten where, among others, I was a speaker. Everywhere the repeal of the death sentence was demanded. Parliamentarians in Paris and Berlin appealed to American courts to postpone the execution. Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann, Albert Einstein, H. G. Wells and even Mussolini joined in protest. In a rare unanimity of world consciousness for law and justice in disregard of all other differences, a defense front was formed. People sensed that injustice for one is a threat to all. However, all efforts came to naught. On August 23, 1927 Sacco and Vanzetti died in the electric chair. Again class interests prevailed over justice and humanity. A short time before the execution was carried out Nicolo Sacco wrote a moving letter to his fourteen-year-old son Dante:

Don't cry Dante, for too many tears have flown in vain, especially from your mother. Be strong for the sake of your mother. When you want to chase away sad thoughts take her to the fields to pick flowers, relax in the shadow of trees and seek rest in nature. Remember that you should not only strive for your own happiness, but help the weak and needy and those who are persecuted for a just cause. They are your best friends, they are comrades who fight and die like your father and like Bartolemeo Vanzetti in order to bring to all working men joy and liberty.<sup>23</sup>



*Note by Sam Dolgoff*

Augustin Souchy's place in the history of twentieth century anarchism rests primarily upon his association with the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers Association (IWA, reorganized in 1921/22). He was one of its founders, one of its first secretaries, editor of its organ, *The Syndicalist*, and one of its most effective propagandists. As such, it is, in my opinion, necessary to supplement his remarks with the following extracts from the original Declaration of Principles of the IWA:

Revolutionary syndicalism, basing itself upon the class struggle of the oppressed against the employing class and the state, seeks the unification of all workers, manual and intellectual (scientific, technical, educational, etc.), into fighting economic organizations. It seeks the reorganization of economic and social institutions on the basis of free communism by means of the revolutionary economic action of the working class itself. **Only self-organized workers' organizations can achieve this.**

Revolutionary syndicalism is the confirmed enemy of every form of economic and social monopoly, and their abolition by means of economic communes and administrative organs (federations) of field and factory workers on the basis of a free system of councils entirely liberated from subordination to any government or political party. Against the politics of the state and of parties it erects the economic organization of labor; against the government of men it sets up the management of things. Consequently, it has as its object, not the conquest of political power, but the abolition of every state function in social life. It considers that, along with the monopoly of property, the monopoly of domination should disappear also, and that any form of the state, including the dictatorship of the proletariat, will be the creator of new monopolies and new privileges; the state could never be an instrument of liberation.

The twofold task of revolutionary syndicalism is to carry on the daily struggle for the economic, social, and cultural improvement of the workers within existing society, and ultimately to take possession and institute the self-administration of economic and social institutions by the workers themselves (so organized that each workplace group will constitute within its own sphere a self-governing, integrated part of the general economic organization. The coordination of the economy is to be achieved by the mutual agreement of local, regional, national, and international federations of workers united by parallel communes and federations of communes.

Revolutionary syndicalism, by direct economic action supports all struggles not in contradiction with its principles—abolition of economic monopoly and the domination of the state. Its most effective weapon is **The General Strike** which is the prelude to **The Social Revolution**.

Enemies of all organized violence by all governments, revolutionary syndicalists realize that the decisive struggle between today's capitalism and tomorrow's free communism will not and cannot take place without serious collisions. Only the economic organizations of the workers themselves, not the military apparatus, can successfully defend the revolution.



## Chapter 6

### 1929: South America

At an international labor union congress held in Buenos Aires in 1929 I participated as representative of the Syndicalist International. Organizer of this convention was the FORA (Federación Obrera Regional Argentina, founded in 1901). This anarchist-oriented Regional Federation of Labor of Argentina had for twenty years published the daily *La Protesta*. In the past century Spanish and Italian immigrants—among them Bakunin's disciple Malatesta—brought the ideas of anarchism to Argentina. Here, as well as in other countries of Latin America, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin were known before Marx and Engels. The discussions at the congress did not encompass methods and ways of conquest of political power but were mainly centered around the economic and social interests of labor and peasants, which, in the opinion of the convention participants, should not be represented by politicians but left to the workers and peasants themselves. In 1929 Lenin's theses about imperialism were not well known on the Latin American continent.

At this meeting however, the authentic representatives of workers and peasants concentrated their discussions concretely around the vital interests of labor and defense against foreign and domestic entrepreneurs as well as state enterprises. The actual demands were: shorter workdays, equal wages for equal work irrespective of sex and race, rejection of militarism and solidarity of the workers of all countries.



Furthermore: promotion of workers' education, formation of a union-connected agency to prevent social inequalities based on irregular immigration, appointment of a special commission for the study of problems of agricultural labor, and finally land reform with respect to the specific requirements of every country.

Although most of the delegates were idealistic anarchists the problems of the present time found a surprisingly practical solution. The mood of the meetings in Argentina, and Uruguay where I spoke subsequently, did not differ in any way from that in Europe. During a speech I gave to a crowd of French railroad workers who came to Argentina to build a new railroad line the light accidentally went out. As I continued in darkness, however, the chairman used a flashlight pointed at my face so that at least the speaker could be seen. In the following discussion the French railroaders pointed out that the way of life of the Argentine workman is not worse than that of his French counterpart, only more meat is consumed in Argentina. That the Argentine worker did not furnish his apartment with traditional antique furniture as did the French was not considered a disadvantage.

I did not encounter illiteracy throughout my travels across the country. There were libraries in every small city and very frequently theater groups visited provincial cities. To be sure, Argentina and Uruguay are the two most advanced countries in all of South America, economically as well as culturally. This I found out during my later trips through South America.

In Rosario, I stayed for a few weeks in the house of Diego Abad de Santillan, whom I had already known in Berlin when he was a student. He married there the daughter of Fritz Kater, the president of the "Free Labor Union A S." Born in Spain, he was Minister for Economic Affairs during the Civil War.

### **Georg Friedrich Nicolai—Fighter for Peace and Liberty**

Georg Friedrich Nicolai, Professor of Medicine and Physiology at the University of his home town Berlin, was, during World War I and after, a well-known personality in public life. At the beginning of the war he refused to sign the war manifesto of representatives of German culture, for Emperor and Reich. In October 1914 he published, together with Albert



Einstein, Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster and Otto Buck, his own anti-war manifesto. Confined to the fortress Graudenz in the same cell where Fritz Reuter was once detained for being a "demagogue," Nicolai wrote the *Biology of War*, a fundamental scientific work of pacifism, in which he proved that war has no biological cause. He escaped to Denmark and published this book in Zurich in 1917. In 1914 Nicolai and Einstein were among the founders of the Bund Neues Vaterland (Federation New Fatherland) which changed its name after the end of the war into the German League for the Rights of Men (I was a member of the league). The lectures which Nicolai resumed after the war at the University of Berlin were soon made impossible by constantly rioting ultra-nationalist students, the forerunners of the Nazis.

He decided to emigrate to Argentina. After teaching medicine at the University of Buenos Aires and Cordova (Cordova was a focal point of Latin American university reforms), he was given a professorship for sociology at the University of Santa Fe. This happened at the time I was in Rosario and I had the opportunity to visit him several times. It took Nicolai only a few years to write his books in Spanish. Of the many works he published in Argentina specific mention should be made of his three-volume *La Biologica del Relativismo Cientifico* (The Biology of Scientific Relativism). Also significant is his study *La Miseria della Dialectica* (The Poverty of Dialectics), the latter a critique of Marx and Engels' polemic pamphlet *The Poverty of Philosophy*, a critical study of Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty*. None of Nicolai's works written after his emigration from Germany was ever published in German.

*The Poverty of Dialectics*, a work of more than 450 pages, begins with a critique of Hegel, whom Nicolai considers a successor of the gnostics and cabalists and ends with Marx whose art to exacerbate Hegelianism he terms a piece of juggling. Nicolai contrasts the irrational multifaceted dialectic with scientific reasoning which is unambiguous and an effective power for peace, excluding everything alluding to war. "The personality of Marx," he said at the end of his book, "is inexorably tied to these questions partly as victim and partly as avenger." And what was meant for the great also goes for the lesser thinkers: We all are victors and



vanquished. Continuity of science, peace and progress are interrelated, are above dialectics and all probing thrusts in the opposite direction. Livius came to Carthage as emissary of war and peace. "Who does not choose the liberating revolution of science must take the revolution of the street."

Nicolai was an apostle of peace and liberty. My talks with him reminded me of the conversation I had with Han Ryner. During our last dialogue I thought of the words of Edgar Quinet: he said to the German philologist Kreuzer in reply to the latter's remark that only a Frenchman can present the German philosophy with such accomplished clarity: "Don't be surprised when, to go down into a dark cave, you need a lantern." The sense of this metaphor: the German spirit is the depth, the French is clarity. In Nicolai I found depth and clarity united.



## *Chapter 7*

### **1930-1933: Europe: The Bloody Curtain Lifts**

A few months later I returned to Germany. It was the year 1929. There I found all indications of a faltering democracy in the "land of the Dichter and Denker" (poets and thinkers). [It was later called the "land der Richter und Henker" (land of the judges and henchmen) —Ed.]

The law-abiding and parliament-oriented political parties seemed to have lost confidence in the legal institutions and organized paramilitary units such as the S.A., S.S., Stahlheim (steel helmet), the Rote Frontkämpfer (red front fighters) and Eiserner Front (iron front) Nazis, German Nationalists (Deutschnationale). Communists and even Social Democrats wanted to be prepared for the last battle. The struggle for power shifted more and more from the Reichstag to the street, where the brown shirts became increasingly predominant. We anarchists and syndicalists, traditionally antiparlamentarian, would have had every reason to gloat but in the face of the seriousness of the situation we were not so frivolous. As a modest minority we did not rattle sabers we did not have, but there was no doubt where we would stand should violence erupt. Our militant comrades did not stand on the sidelines. At that time we still had 50,000 union members. A few years before, four persons of different political persuasions met in the Cafe Adler, Berlin, Doenhofplatz and had a discussion on socio-philosophical topics and political problems. They were Marxist Karl Korsch, an ex-member of



the Communist Party, the writer Alfred Doeblin, the former head of the Russian Department of Justice, Isaak Nachman Steinberg (a former leading member of the Left Social Revolutionaries) and the author of this book. We were not in agreement on all points but the discussions were so stimulating that we decided to meet every week. Our weekly meetings were talked about and soon we were joined by sundry non-conformists and dissidents of the left socialist camp: workers, intellectuals, students—who all wanted to broaden their horizons. Very soon there were thirty to fifty participants. Everybody had the right to speak his mind; we did not form a club, had no rules, collected no fees and no uniformity of political thinking was required. We were a free school of socialists and respected every point of view. When, at the beginning of the thirties, the Nazi danger became acute we were considering the formation of a fighting group against fascism and national socialism together with organizations to the left of the CP, political friends of Otto Ruehle and Franz Pfemfert, syndicalists and anarchists. Our objective was not, at least basically, the defense of the Weimar Republic which we did not consider an ideal socio-political order. However, we held national socialism to be the greater evil, against which we all should stand united together. Unfortunately we could not stop the growing flood of national socialism. But the freedom fighters who went through our undogmatic school were a valuable asset of the movement for social progress.

### **Erich Muehsam—Knight of Freedom**

On the night of the Reichstag fire, Erich Muehsam had dinner in my apartment. The news broadcasts were extremely disquieting. The "Jew" and "Anarchist" Erich Muehsam was the target of hatemongering by the official Nazi daily *Voelkischer Beobachter*. He was castigated for his role during the Bavarian Soviet Republic and made responsible for the shooting of hostages on April 25, 1919, although he was already under arrest on April 13, 1919. He was now in acute danger. I asked him not to return to his apartment. Stay tonight with me, I told him. One floor below lived a police sergeant sympathetic to the Social Democratic Party; he promised to give me a warning ahead of time should a Nazi raid be in the offing. His beat was next to my section and the S.S. at that time



were in the habit of planning searches a day ahead and taking a police officer along. "This night at least you are still safe," I said to Erick. However he did not believe that he was in immediate danger. He intended to flee to Prague the next day and went home to prepare for this trip. The trip came to naught. He was taken from his home the next day.

Muehsam's fate is well known. When his torturers asked him to sing the "Horst Wessel Song," a Nazi hymn, he intoned the "Internationale." They wanted to force him to shovel his own grave and to lick saliva from the floor. Thanks to his will power he resisted all attempts to humiliate him. To his fellow prisoners he remarked that he would not do his henchmen the favor of committing suicide. On the morning of July 10, 1934 he was found hanging in the latrine of the Oranienburg Prison. His sufferings had lasted fifteen months. A few weeks later I wrote a pamphlet about the life, sufferings and death of Muehsam which was published under the title *Caballero de la libertad* (Knight of Freedom) by the Spanish syndicalists in Barcelona.

Returning home a few days after the Reichstag fire I was attacked by three young men. By a quick movement I managed to shake them off and close the front door. Now it was time for me to disappear. I sat in the train bound for Paris as warrants were posted on all the advertisement pillars in Berlin with photos of wanted anti-Nazis. Among them was my picture. The brown barbarians could not get me but they apprehended my brother who came to visit me. In the police station they discovered that they had arrested the wrong guy, gave him a beating and let him go. My library was seized and partly destroyed; books of classical authors were kept but socialist literature was burned in the street. A bloody curtain had fallen on Germany. My second emigration would last longer than the first.



## Chapter 8

### 1933: Second Emigration

After my arrival in Paris I wrote, at the request of my Swedish friends, a pamphlet against national socialism which was published in Stockholm under the title *Den braun Pesten* (the brown pest). The Swedish syndicalists demanded economic and cultural boycott of the Third Reich but their campaign found only little response. A few movie theaters took Nazi films off their program after public clamor. This was a moral success for the anti-fascists but only a pinprick for the Nazis. In France, especially in Paris, there were never before as many political refugees as at the time of the beginning of the Hitler regime. The number of exiles was so high that Georg Bernhard, former editor in chief of the *Vossische Zeitung*, found it economically feasible to publish a daily newspaper, *Die Pariser Tageszeitung* (Paris daily). Leopold Schwarzschild shifted his *Tagebuch* (Diary) from the Spree to the Seine and Willi Meunzenberg, after breaking away from Stalin, edited *Die Zukunft* (Future) for a time. I went regularly to the meetings of German refugees where political problems and social theories were discussed. I still remember the tones of Marxist speakers who considered Hitlerism the end phase of capitalism predicted by Marx and the inevitability of the proletarian revolution after its collapse. On a much higher level were my conversations with Hellmut von Gerlach, whom I often saw in the French section of the League for Human Rights, and also with Alfred



Doeblin in the Café Closerie des Lilas on Montparnasse.

I earned my daily bread and weekly steak as a free-lance journalist. I wrote for *Goeteborgposten* (Goeteborg), *Arbetaren* (Stockholm), and the *New York Freie Arbeiterstimmen* (Free Workers' Voice). I felt quite at home in Paris, where I had French relatives and stood in close contact with my libertarian friends. Being married to a French woman, I was considered one of them.

In France too there were ultranationalist parties admiring the methods of Mussolini and Hitler, but they did not at that time gain much ground. Their leader was Colonel De La Rocque who, imitating the symbol of the Nazi swastika, chose the Gallic Croix de Feu (fire cross). His followers marched to the Chambre de Deputes (parliament) on February 4, 1934 with the intention of chasing away the deputies and establishing a right-wing dictatorship. The attempt ended in dismal failure. Neither the objective nor the subjective factors were favorable for the success of such an enterprise. Faced with the defeat of democracy in Germany the parties of the left joined forces and formed the Popular Front (Volksfront). One week after the march of the men of the Croix de Feu, a huge demonstration was organized by the Rassemblement Populaire (as they were called) in Paris. Participants were blue- and white-collar workers, intellectuals, students from all leftist persuasions, bourgeois radicals and also Communists. The elections in May of the same year brought victory to the left; they came to power, albeit temporarily.

The later popular front government under the leadership of the socialist Léon Blum (from June 1936 to June 1937) initiated social reforms such as the forty-hour week, extension of the yearly paid vacations and others, which somewhat pacified the tense social climate. With regard to foreign policy the Blum government was in an ideological dilemma. The socialist heart wanted disarmament and peace; political reason, however, especially after Hitler walked out on the League of Nations, made reinforcement of military readiness appear necessary. One excluded the other.

### Louis Lecoin—A Radical Pacifist

My antimilitarist friends were unflinching doves, first and



foremost my old comrade Louis Lecoin, with whom I had been in contact since my first sojourn in France in 1921. For Louis Lecoin, militarism was militarism, whether German or French. In a meeting of delegates of syndicalists of the Paris region, he was critical of our comrades who castigated rearmament across the Rhine river but did not speak out against the colossal armament budget of France. He rejected war per se, even a war against a fascist foe. According to his opinion no democracy nor liberty were worth a war. War itself was the greatest evil to him. He was even ready to forego his ideal of liberty which he called anarchy if mountains of corpses were necessary to attain it.

Born 1888 in central France, small and slender of stature, the face of this blond Celt did not show the strength of his character. He started his career as a militant at the age of 22. During the time of his military service his regiment was ordered to use force of arms against striking workers. Lecoin refused to obey and was arraigned before a military tribunal. He declared that when he was in school he learned that the purpose of the army was to defend his country against its external enemy and not to shoot striking workers. His conscience would not let him be abused. After six months imprisonment he was transferred as a punitive measure to a unit consisting of disciplined soldiers assigned to menial and dangerous duties. Soon after his discharge he became active in the libertarian movement. Later he was sentenced to seven years in prison for instigating a political demonstration. During World War I he was shifted from one prison to another and spent eight years of his youth behind bars. He described this phase of his life in a book, *De prison en prison* (from prison to prison). Released in 1920, he became a member of the editorial staff of the periodical *Le Libertaire*. For half a century he was the soul of the anti-militaristic movement of France. He was at the helm whenever and wherever it became necessary to defend human rights.

In his memoirs, *Le Cours d'une Vie* (Paris 1965), he describes most vividly the various stages of his struggle. The great French revolution abolished the feudal system and proclaimed human rights but also made military service compulsory. An institution for the defense of the revolution turned into a conservative force. For a century and a half severe



penalties were exacted in France for conscientious objectors. In 1958 there were still more than 150 conscientious objectors in French prisons. Lecoin went to any length to obtain their freedom. Together with Albert Camus he drafted a statute that would make it possible to assign conscientious objectors to non-military jobs. This document was submitted to the government, October 15, 1959. Grapevine had it that a majority of the deputies in parliament favored enactment of such a law. But two years later there was still no action taken. In May 1962 Lecoin wrote a letter to the president of the Republic, Charles De Gaulle, informing him that, beginning June 1, he would begin a hunger strike in the offices of the Committee of Conscientious Objectors and refuse to take nourishment until the government was ready to enact the proposed bill and free those now in jail. Lecoin did what he set out to do. The media reported this unusual act of an unflinching pacifist and even abroad it was widely publicized. From Italy came wires of support from Saragat, later president of the senate, and Nenni, later secretary of state. Also from U.S. pacifist circles came manifestations of solidarity.

After twenty-two days of fast Lecoin was near death. Doctors had abandoned hope of saving his life. The media reported his imminent passing away. At this point the French government gave in and agreed to submit to parliament a draft proposal for enactment of a bill permitting assignment of conscientious objectors to nonmilitary duties. The tension subsequently eased and public opinion calmed down. Lecoin was finally vindicated. French pacifists were jubilant. One man, 75 years old, with a hunger strike as his only weapon, forced *La Grande Nation* to yield. The conservative *Figaro Littéraire* wrote on June 30, 1962—under the title “Only One Just Made It”: “Lecoin—in the throes of death, is hopefully saved. He started a hunger strike to obtain exemption of conscientious objectors from military duties. Lecoin has won. One well-intentioned will of steel surmounted the snail’s pace of an administration, basically not against the bill, but extremely slow to make it law. It is known that De Gaulle, also in favor of the bill, wanted Lecoin to be kept alive. There is reason to believe that his intercession speeded the process up. Thus Lecoin, already given up, could regain his health.”



When Lecoin died at the age of 82, he was deeply mourned by all friends of peace and liberty. In 1964, sixteen French intellectuals, among them a Nobel Prize winner and members of the Académie Française, petitioned the Nobel Peace Prize Committee to nominate Lecoin for this award. It is regrettable that the Norwegian parliament did not comply. This honor would not only have been awarded to one who without doubt merited it but would also have been a boost to all who fought for peace.



## *Chapter 9:*

### I Meet Anarchist "Terrorists"

#### Alexander Berkman

Alexander Berkman, born in 1870 in Vilno (then Russia), wrote in high school a paper considered to be atheistic, provoking the scorn of his teachers. Two years later he joined a group of revolutionary students. Son of a bourgeois family, he was blacklisted, which in those days meant exclusion from all high schools in the vast czarist empire and made it impossible to continue his education. At the age of 18 he emigrated, after the death of his father, to the U.S., the promised land of liberty and democracy. Coming from a revolutionary milieu, the young man also joined the social avant-garde in his new country. He learned typesetting working on the German language paper *Freiheit* (liberty) edited by Johann Most. Now he belonged to the working class. In the land of the free and pious, economic circumstances were far from ideal for the working masses. The work day was twelve hours; wages were low; there was neither health insurance nor old age pensions; and whoever was out of work lived at a starvation level.

A few months before Berkman's arrival, four anarchists were executed in Chicago. Worldwide indignation at this judicial murder was still fresh in the memory of many people when, in 1892, the workers at the Carnegie steel mills in Homestead, Pennsylvania were striking for shorter working hours. On July 6, Pinkertons (private detectives hired by the employers) opened fire on striking workers, killing eleven of



them and an eleven-year-old boy. This brutal murder of unarmed demonstrators aroused great indignation all over the country. Even conservatives of every walk of life demanded punishment of the culprits. However, the executive director of the steel mill was not held accountable and remained unmolested, although he assumed responsibility for the massacre. His name was Henry Clay Frick. Police and the Department of Justice remained aloof.

When the government also did not interfere, Alexander Berkman decided to take justice into his own hands and avenge its victims. How and why? The Danish poet Karin Michaelis said: "Alexander Berkman has grown to be 22 years old now, without having eliminated sin and injustice from this world; he decides to sacrifice his own life, to kill Frick and, being killed himself, to help the working man and especially the cause. It is a kind of propaganda thought over, as one thinks over at the age of 22 and as an idealist." Berkman embarked on the long trip to Homestead, invaded Frick's office and fired three shots at him. Frick was only slightly wounded. Berkman himself was injured during his arrest and was sentenced to 22 years in jail. He spent 14 years in the infamous Atlanta Penitentiary. His *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* is a tale of dreadful experiences; this book belongs with the most important jail descriptions in world literature.<sup>24</sup> He shows how men can act in most inhuman ways if protected by immunity of official function. That they could not break Berkman is proof of his spiritual strength and his magnanimity. Freed in 1906, he resumed his fight for social change. He took charge of the monthly *Mother Earth*, edited by his comrade-in-arms Emma Goldman, went on lecture tours across the entire country, organized strikes and demonstrations and campaigned for the release of political prisoners.

Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman spoke out vigorously for birth control. When Emma Goldman had to go to jail for her activities on behalf of women, *Little Review Anthology* wrote: "Emma Goldman is in jail because she told women not to be satisfied with keeping their mouths shut and their thighs open."

The U.S. entered World War I (spring 1917) and Alexander was leading the fight against compulsory military service (heretofore not practiced in the U.S.). This did not gain him



any laurels but two years in jail. The same sentence was meted out to Emma Goldman for the same offense. After his release he rushed to the defense of labor leader Tom Mooney, who, although innocent, was sentenced to death for exploding a bomb during a patriotic rally. The campaign was successful; Mooney's life was spared. But now the Justice Department of California requested extradition of Berkman, who, already back in New York, faced a heavy prison sentence. Thanks to strong protest demonstrations of American and Russian workers (it was the time of the Russian Revolution) the extradition did not take place. By the end of 1919 Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman and 245 left-radicals, all born in Russia and all revolutionaries, were deported to Russia.

May 1920 in Moscow: I met Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman for the first time in person. I admired them for their active struggle for social justice, peace and liberty. The features of this man in his fifties showed willpower, resolution and energy. My personal contact with him confirmed the mental image I had of him—a man who in his youth risked his life, overcoming all difficulties, for whom there was no turning back. Berkman was no stranger to me; we belonged to the same political groups and had common friends. Nothing was more natural than addressing each other by the first name at the first meeting. My first conversation with "Sascha" in the presence of Emma Goldman turned around the Russian Revolution; its deterioration troubled us very much. The dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party became ever more oppressive, the persecution of non-Communist revolutionaries ever more brutal. What Berkman thought about the Russian Revolution is best expressed in his own words. In his pamphlet *The Russian Tragedy* he said: "My heart was joyfully beating when I came to Russia. I wanted to serve the people with all my strength and felt that I would be young again in hard work and my devotion to the common good. I was ready to sacrifice my life so that the great hope of the world would become reality."

But the liberties won by the revolutionary workers were recklessly abolished by the Communist Party. Berkman told me that Karl Radek, then secretary of the Communist International, asked him to translate Lenin's *Leftwing*



*Communism: An Infantile Disorder* into English. He agreed on the condition that he be permitted to write his own commentary into the preface and postscript. Lenin did not give his permission. Under dictatorships criticism is not welcome. Czarism was defeated, the followers of capitalism disorganized and there was no danger from conservatives of any kind. Yet there was no liberty and little bread. The insurrection of Kronstadt was the climax of the inner struggle. Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman openly sympathized with the workers of Petrograd and the sailors of Kronstadt who fought for an equitable method of food rationing, free elections of soviets, freedom of press and assembly. Lenin and Trotsky answered with cannon, tanks and machine guns. Eighteen thousand workers, sailors and soldiers were killed. "To keep silent now," wrote Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman to the Communists in power, "would be tantamount to a crime." The two anarchists saw no possibility for free political activity in Russia at that time. Under the heel of the Communist Party revolutionary Russia became reactionary. The eighteen-year-old Alexander Berkman emigrated from czarist Russia and the fifty-one-year-old Berkman had to emigrate from the Russia of the Communist dictatorship. The second emigration was worse than the first; all his illusions were lost, all the hopes of decades collapsed. The rule of the Communist Party meant to him the ruin of the revolution.

At the end of 1921 Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman left the land of their dreams in utter disappointment. After a short stay in Sweden they came to Berlin. Berkman, who knew about suffering behind bars from his own experiences, did not forget his comrades left behind in Communist prisons. He collected money for them and published an information sheet about political persecutions in the Soviet Union. In his pamphlets *The Kronstadt Rebellion* and *The Russian Tragedy* he stressed the incompatibility of dictatorship and socialism. In his book *The ABC of Anarchism* he demonstrated, by his experiences in Lenin's Russia, that social justice cannot be attained by a controlled economy. He recommended a free association of independently operating producers. During his stay in Berlin I had the opportunity to know Berkman better and was impressed by the unselfishness of his endeavors and his deep sense of solidarity. Berlin was



for most of the Russian émigrés a transitory and not a permanent residence. Only a few could get used to the life in this city. Most of them, after the end of the economic boom period and the rising danger of the Nazi movement, were looking for more hospitable places.

Berkman was *persona non grata* in the United States. France, because of his past, would not grant him permission to stay. Only after Bertrand Russell, Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein pleaded for him, did he get a permit of permanent residence in France, the motherland of the European revolution. He died June 28, 1936, two weeks before the start of the Spanish Civil War. Emma Goldman said about his end: "The long years of prison and exile, the inhuman humiliations he suffered—he even had to beg for the air to breathe from servile officials—the nerve-wracking exhausting struggle for mere survival and the grave illness to boot, all that made life to him an unbearable burden. Alexander Berkman hated to be dependent and did not want to be a burden to those who were near to him. So . . . he did what he always predicted. He hastened his end by his own hand." In contrast to professional revolutionaries, Alexander Berkman was a constant rebel. In his youth he considered himself to be an arm of worldly justice. He, alone, wanted to punish a potentate who was not afraid to order the killing of innocent people. The attack misfired and he had to endure untold suffering for this attempt. Half a century of the sixty-six years of his life was devoted to the fight for freedom and social justice. Even in prison he stood up for the rights of his fellow-prisoners. As an unsuccessful avenger, he was upright in character and an unflinching anarchist.

### **Buenaventura Durruti**

Being secretary of the International Workers Association I had close contact with the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists who, during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, organized a combat association with the Catalonian left. It was in 1927 when the leader of the Catalonian autonomy movement, Colonel Francisco Macia Llussa visited us in the hope of getting financial help for the common fight against dictatorship. Unfortunately we had to disappoint him because the syndicalist international was very poor. He then turned to the Red Trade



Union International in Moscow but without success. Stalin was not interested in the objectives of Catalonians and syndicalists, which were of no benefit to Communism. After the municipal elections of April 1931 giving the Republicans the majority, Macia had the satisfaction of being the first to proclaim the birth of an autonomous Catalonia, followed the next day by the proclamation of the Spanish Republic. In 1977 the Catalanian patriots decided to erect a monument in Barcelona to their legendary champion.

On a summer evening in 1928, coming home to my apartment in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, I heard a man's deep voice sing the French refrain: "C'est le piston, piston, piston qui fait marcher le machine" (It's the piston, piston, piston that drives the machine). The singer was a tall, strong man with dark hair in his mid-thirties who played with my three-year-old boy. This was my first encounter with Buenaventura Durruti.

He was born in 1896, son of a railroad man, in the Spanish provincial capital of Leon. After finishing school he became a locksmith and mechanic's apprentice and participated, even in his early youth, in the struggles of the trade unions. A militant (but only by his own free will) but not a military man, he evaded the draft for military service by his flight to France so that—as he wrote to his sisters—the king will have one soldier less but one revolutionary more. Connections with Spaniards in exile and reading of libertarian literature brought him to anarchism. After two years abroad he returned to the land of his birth. The twenty-two-year-old was already one of the most devoted activists in the fight for social progress. World War I was a period of economic boom in Spain. Full employment created a favorable situation, propitious for the fight for an increase of the low wages and improvement of working conditions, which were very poor. Spain was socially backward in comparison with more developed industrial countries. The arrogant attitude of the employers and the rudimentary social legislation pushed the workers along the path of direct action, a tradition since the days of the First International. Government, police, army and church sided with capital that radical unions should be destroyed and the most active labor leaders removed. *Pistoleros* (armed private police) were unleashed to go after known



labor leaders. The shooting of Angel Pestaña in broad daylight was answered with an angry protest strike. No less than thirty-three syndicalists were shot in 1920, partly by pistoleros and partly by police under the pretext that they were "trying to escape." Terror from above was answered with terror from below. The conservative prime minister Eduardo Dato was the victim of assassination by Catalanian anarchists Pedro Mateu and Luis Nicolau. The organizer of the pistoleros was killed by anarchists Francisco Ascaso and Juan Garcia Oliver. Governor Regueral, the man responsible for persecutions in Aragon, also met a violent death. The retribution for the assassination of C.N.T. leader Salvador Segui by police was the killing of the archbishop of Saragossa, Monsignor Soldevilla, by revolutionaries. It was Soldevilla who hired *pistoleros* in his archdiocese. The assassinations were committed by one or two armed comrades; no centralized terrorist organization existed. Durruti entered into a comrade-in-arms relationship with Francisco Ascaso which lasted until his death. To prevent compromising the unions the individually operating activists united in an ideological association called Los Justicieros, later changed to Los Solidarios. Both preceded the F.A.I. (Federación Anarquista Ibérica).

Help and encouragement were needed by the prisoners and their lawyers had to be paid. When unions were dissolved, cash in their possession was usually seized. Hence there was no badly needed money around. Durruti found a way out of this predicament. "When the government is robbing us of our money, we have a right to reciprocate." This of course took courage, self-reliance and steadfastness. There was no lack of these qualities in both Durruti and Ascaso. In surprise attacks on money transports they got (according to the press) 100,000 Pesetas from the Banco España and 300,000 from the Bank of Bilbao. Durruti's mother was quoted in press reports as having said: "Whether my son manipulates millions I do not know, but I do know that, whenever he comes home I have to clothe him from head to foot."

Durruti was caught and arrested in Madrid and subsequently charged with draft evasion, bank robbery, and with conspiracy to assassinate King Alphonse XIII. Since no evidence could be presented on the latter two charges he was ordered to be sent to Morocco. Before the order could be carried



out, he escaped. In September 1923 General Primo de Rivera proclaimed his dictatorship. To forestall any pretext for intervention syndicalist unions stopped all activities. However, militant groups continued the struggle illegally. Durruti and Ascaso succeeded in crossing the border into France. One battle was lost but the élan remained unbroken and the fight was continuing.

One year later a general insurrection was prepared. Planned were a general strike, occupation of army barracks with the help of comrades among the soldiers and non-commissioned officers, and guerrilla operations in the Pyrenees under the leadership of Durruti and Ascaso. When the first action misfired, the generals mobilized all the forces available, against whom the revolutionaries were no match. The rebellion collapsed and reaction went full blast. The prisons were full and the families of arrested militants needed financial support. There was no money available since the unions were dissolved and collections could not be taken up. Durruti and Ascaso decided to raise money in Spanish Latin America. They were joined by Gregorio Jover, a member of the group Los Solidarios. They started their drive at the end of 1924 in Cuba and finished one-half year later in Argentina.

Again in France in the spring of 1926, Ascaso, Durruti and Jover heard the strategically important news of the invitation of King Alphonse XIII to the celebrations of the French national holiday on July 14. His presence in Paris offered them a rare opportunity for a decisive action against dictatorship, the kidnapping of a king. Careful preparations were made but the plan was discovered and the three musketeers (as Durruti, Ascaso and Jover were called) landed in jail. Spain requested extradition. Since the offense was of a political nature this request met with public opposition. The liberal and democratic media as well as representatives of Spanish culture in exile, among them Miguel de Unamuno, José Orega y Gasset and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, pleaded on behalf of the would-be kidnappers. The government yielded. Then Argentina demanded their extradition for political crimes. This too met with strong opposition from the public. More than 250 deputies of parliament sent a petition to the prime minister for release of the three Spaniards. In the opinion of the deputies, political offenses could only be dealt



with politically. Poincaré, the prime minister, wanted to avoid a test vote which could have led to his resignation, and rejected the Argentine request. The three anarchists, imprisoned now for over a year, were released but not permitted to stay in France. Communist Russia declined to grant them political asylum. Durruti and Ascaso decided to go to Germany illegally. They came to Berlin. After an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a residence permit from the Berlin police for the two, I turned to Kurt Rosenfeld, a former Social Democratic minister of justice, whom I knew personally. He was a renowned and successful lawyer. In his opinion it was impossible to get them a residence permit because of their known participation in the assassination of Cardinal Soldevilla. The Party of the Center (*Zentrumspartei*), member of a coalition government, would insist on their extradition. However, if they remained in Berlin without approval there was a chance that officialdom would look the other way. Durruti stayed several weeks in my apartment. Thus I had an opportunity to appreciate his modesty, honesty and his open character. The militant anarchists felt isolated in Berlin, far from their Spanish comrades in France and Belgium who conspired against dictatorship and also far from their Spanish homeland. Tired of inactivity, they left for Belgium where, together with Macia, they made preparations for an insurrection to topple the ruling dictatorship. The fall of the monarchy was imminent. In the *familia libertaria*, the international libertarian family to which we belonged, we felt like brother and sister to each other. During my many trips across the old and new continent, I was always welcomed by my friends and given shelter. Conversely, my house was open to all friends of the same political persuasion. I remember the best known among them. They were: Emma Goldman; Camillo Berneri, a professor of philosophy persecuted by Mussolini (he was shot from behind by Communists during the tragic events of May 1937—indeed a tragic week—in Barcelona); and the Spanish intellectual Victoriano Orobón Fernández, whom I lent a suit of clothes so that he could present himself in decent attire at the Berlitz School when he applied for a job.

At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War I was in Barcelona with Durruti and his comrades. The battles of those days



of July were of epic greatness. Ascaso died during an assault on the military barracks of Atarazanas. In this battle inexperienced anarchists won a victory over well trained professional soldiers. Two days after victory in Catalonia, Durruti led a column of several thousand on a march to Aragon; its capital Saragossa was occupied by insurgent military forces. In every village and town through which Durruti's column marched a social revolution took place, as if by magic. Durruti's advance was stopped cold at Gaspé by Franco's superior forces. The military insurrection and the social revolution was followed by positional warfare. When a few months later Franco's troops occupied Madrid, Durruti went there to help defend the threatened city. His appearance contributed to revivifying the lowered battle morale. The number of combat victims was atrocious. Two-thirds of the 4,000 militiamen who came to Madrid with Durruti died in the course of a few weeks of battle. He too was hit by a bullet in the middle of his heart. It was a spent bullet.

Durruti's life as a revolutionary started when he, a seventeen-year-old, organized a strike and ended when he was forty years old, as commander of a fighting unit in the Spanish Civil War. He was no theoretician but a man of action, not afraid to commit assassination for political ends (although there was no definite evidence that he actually did). His turbulent life fascinated historians and poets, among them Hans Magnus Enzenberger. Detailed biographies were published in Spanish and French. Durruti was not one of the generals who died in bed. He fought as a militant revolutionary. In his unit there were only comrades with equal rights. He ate the same meals as were prepared for all others. He slept on the floor because he relinquished his bed to those who needed it more than he did. He held discipline not by subordination but by his own exemplary attitude. This was his force as leader among equals. Fervent idealist, fearless fighter, incorruptible character. This was Buenaventura Durruti. Born July 14, the day of the assault on the Bastille that initiated the French Revolution, he died November 20, the day of the beginning of the great American Revolution. Thus destiny bestowed upon him revolution as predestination.



### **Simon Radowitzky**

No Sybil could have predicted that Simon Radowitzky, born 1889 in the Ukrainian village of Stepanitz, would attempt, on November 14, 1909, the assassination of a chief of police of Buenos Aires and atone for this deed by serving twenty-one years in the notorious jail Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego. What was it that prompted the otherwise very gentle youth, to whom the use of force was a horror, to commit such an act? This human tragedy is only comprehensible in connection with the then prevailing social conditions.

To make it possible for his children to get a good education, Radowitzky's father, who himself grew up with only the Talmud, moved to the industrial city of Ekaterinoslav. Young Radowitzky acquired a rudimentary knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics. Poverty forced his father to take his ten-year-old son out of school. As a blacksmith's apprentice, Simon got room and board but had to work hard from six o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock in the evening, with only short lunch and dinner breaks. The barely eleven-year-old boy's sleeping accommodation was a hard cot under the dining table of his master's apartment. There he overheard until late at night conversations of his master's daughter with friends turning around politics, the oppression of the people by the czarist government and the struggles for social progress. Strange words, new thoughts and another world opened up for him. These evening courses—as he called them later—were of vital importance to the spiritual development and the future militancy of this young listener. When he was fourteen years old, Simon Radowitzky worked in a hardware plant in Ekaterinoslav. In 1904 the workers of this plant went on strike for a reduction of the working time from twelve to ten hours per day. During a street demonstration the young laborer was gravely injured by the saber of a Cossack; he was bedridden for half a year. Barely recovered, the fifteen-year-old distributed socialist handbills. He was caught and sentenced to four months in prison. The revolution in 1905 had a decisive influence on Radowitzky's destiny. The storm of indignation that rose in all of Russia after the bloody Sunday of January 22 reached also Ekaterinoslav. Simon Radowitzky, second secretary of the soviet—



despite his youthful years—of the plant Brandsi Zawet, ordered the sirens turned on, whereupon the crew—as previously agreed—left for the street. This temerity could have cost him deportation to Siberia. However, giving in to the admonitions of his parents and comrades, he escaped to Germany. In Hamburg he boarded a steamer for Argentina. What awaited him in the “terra incognita” of the new continent? Would his youthful intelligence be used for the purpose of acquiring property? Would he participate in the struggles of labor? The young immigrant had no marshal’s baton in his knapsack but a passionately beating heart in his breast.

He found work in the smithy Zambeni, joined the union and learned the language of the country; he was a reader of the anarchist daily *La Protesta*. Here he discovered the theoretical justification for his past activities. Although on the face of it there was political freedom in La Plata country, exploitation, poverty and ignorance were widespread. Also here workers had to fight hard for economic and social improvement. On May 1, 1909 the unions organized—as in years past—the traditional demonstration which in all of Latin America took place in memory of the martyrs of Chicago. The slogans were shorter working hours (hitherto ten to twelve hours daily) and improvement of working conditions. The police chief of Buenos Aires, Colonel Ramon Falcon, promptly prohibited the march. However, the workers were unwilling to renounce their constitutionally guaranteed rights. Thirty thousand workers gathered in Plaza Lorca. Colonel Falcon arrived with his police forces and ordered them to open fire. The result was eight dead and forty wounded demonstrators.

This bloodbath aroused angry indignation. The workers demanded the resignation and punishment of the brutal police chief but the government stood behind him and did nothing. Protest strikes called the following day spread over the entire country. This time the government went into action and outlawed the unions, prohibited publication of the leftist press and arrested all known labor leaders. A week later, however, calm was restored, the arrested labor leaders released and the prohibition of publication of the leftist press abolished. The unions could resume business, and the workers returned to work. The guilty police chief remained in office.



Radowitzky was in the midst of the melee, saw comrades slaughtered and remembered the charges of the Cossacks in czarist Russia. Out of a sense of solidarity he felt that justice should be done. Thirty years later he said to me: "If there is no justice from the higher-ups, it should come from below; when collective conscience fails, individual conscience should prevail."

This prompted the nineteen year old into retaliatory action. On November 14, 1909, six months after the bloody events of May, the evening papers reported in fat headlines the assassination of police chief Ramon Falcon. The news was received with satisfaction by the workers and caused great consternation in government circles. Presuming a planned conspiracy by anarchists, draconic steps were taken. Martial law was declared for two months, the union federation FORA was dissolved and publication of the anarchist press prohibited. However, it became clear soon that the assassination was an individual act without any accomplices. Radowitzky made the bomb himself in the plant where he worked, bought a handgun with money saved from his wages. The bomb was thrown into the coach and killed the victim instantly. Radowitzky turned the gun against himself but in his nervousness failed to hit a vital organ. He was seriously injured but survived. Before the court he declared: "I killed the man who was responsible, and who was at the helm of his Cossacks who massacred workers. My heart and that of many others was bleeding on that afternoon. What I did was an act of justice; I fight for a better, a free, and a dignified future of humanity." The defendant being a minor, the death penalty could not be applied. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to the prison of Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego. There he spent his days in a dark and damp dungeon, often with only bread and water as nourishment. He remained unrepentant and was treated with the utmost severity. Ten years went by. Radowitzky's friends, the unions, and also socialists pleaded in vain for release of the prisoner in the far-off Tierra del Fuego. Many reports emphasized his exemplary behavior and his solidarity with his fellow-prisoners. He was a man who, in spite of his sufferings, did not lose his sense of dignity. The liberal press, leftist intellectuals and bourgeois philanthropists, aware of his condition, found that ten years of jail was



enough atonement for an action committed with unselfish motivation and demanded amnesty. When, ten years after sentencing and imprisonment, the expected release did not materialize, Simon's friends planned for his escape. The plan succeeded. Radowitzky and his helpers landed safely and full of hope (like the late Magellan) on the southern tip of Chile near Puntas Arenas. The hope turned into disappointment. The Chileans sent the famous and at the same time dreaded assassin back to the cold hell. Now another time of suffering began for the convict.

A parliamentary commission of inquiry found that the treatment of prisoners in Ushuaia was inhuman and that the bad reputation of this institution was not unfounded. The campaign for Radowitzky's release took on new vigor. Nevertheless eleven more years went by until it was crowned with success. Señora Medina de Botano, the wife of the editor of the liberal daily *Critica*, brought about the release of the famous prisoner by president Irigoyen.

When Radowitzky began serving his sentence he was a promising youngster; upon release from jail, a mature man of forty. His health was impaired but his spirit was unbroken. Twenty years of bodily suffering and spiritual torture did not shake his faith in humanity. Expelled from Argentina he found asylum in neighboring Uruguay. With his first earned money he bought gifts for friends and their children, for to please others brought him satisfaction and happiness. Professor Luce Fabri wrote about his first stay in Montevideo: "One day he came with a beautiful briefcase as a present for me. I exhorted him to economize the little money he earned and not be too generous. He looked at me sadly and said softly, 'So many years I did not enjoy the happiness of giving.' He was sad that I spoiled his joy."

In spite of his confinement of many years Simon Radowitzky was not the man to withdraw into his snail's shell. After the March 1933 coup d'état in Uruguay he participated in the illegal struggle against dictator Gabriel Terras. He was arrested and deported to the isolated Isla de Flores. The Russian embassy offered him permission to return to the land of his birth. However, he declined to go into a country where new persecutions would await him. I was always aware of Simon Radowitzky's actions and sufferings. In the 1920s I



tried to arouse public interest in him by my articles in the Swedish press. In 1929 Rudolf Rocker and I were speakers at a protest rally in Boeckers Hall in Berlin. A unanimously voted resolution was acclaimed to send a telegram to the government of Argentina requesting amnesty.

In Barcelona in 1936 I met the taciturn prisoner of Ushuaia for the first time in person. He came to Spain to fight against insurgent General Franco and for the social revolution. The forty-seven-year-old went to the Aragon front as a militiaman and later worked in the Department of Culture of the unions. His regular, well-proportioned features gave the impression of a well-balanced nature, his strong chin showed energy and resolution, his shining eyes kindness. When, at a time of penury, he happened to get hold of a bottle of milk, he gave it to a pregnant woman who—as he said—needed it more than he. After the collapse of the republic, Radowitzky found political asylum in hospitable Mexico as a refugee under the name of Raoul Gomez. In the country of “institutional revolution” where social revolution became evolution and the labor movement tries to achieve prosperity and cultural progress by peaceful means, he never thought of assassination attempts. Force for him as not an end in itself. Here, a ten-year friendship gave me a chance to appreciate his pure character. After the end of World War II we worked together in the Mexican branch of the International Rescue and Relief Committee for the care of political refugees in semi-starved Europe, above all by sending CARE packages.

Radowitzky's last years were very sad. His body, wrecked by long years of imprisonment, was weak and frail. When he was not hospitalized, he spent his days in a dingy attic of an apartment building. He died February 29, 1956. Spanish refugees and other émigrés attended his funeral. In the same year I published his biography under the title *Una vida por un ideal* (A Life for an Ideal). With Radowitzky's passing one of the last social revolutionaries of the Russian Revolution of 1905, one of the finest idealists of the international labor movement was gone. He was no theoretician; his only literary testament are letters from prison, published in 20,000 copies in Argentina. He was a man of action out of a deep inner conviction. Discussions of abstract problems were not in his line. He practiced social justice in action in every respect in



public and within the circle of his friends. He had no spiritual bond with the fanatical assassins of our days who, to suit their purpose, do not spare the lives of innocent people. His only act of retribution was punishment of a culprit protected by the government in his official position. He was not subservient to nationalism; he did not fight for the power of a class, not even that of the proletariat. Nobody had anything to fear of an assassin of his kind who loved liberty and peace.

Characteristic for him are the words that Hedwig Lachman wrote for her husband, Gustav Landauer:

He had no choice, nor did he tire  
Demanding no reward and of his strength aware.  
Following the call of his heart's desire  
Did he not mind the thorns and risk,  
Willing to bear his destiny so hard,  
Not knowing other goals and happiness on earth  
Than driving for his deep ideals brisk.



## *Chapter 10*

### **Anarchism and Violence**

Alexander Berkman, Buenaventura Durruti and Simon Radowitzky have a special place in my memory. Neither stiff necked fanatics nor narrow minded doctrinarians, the fundamental motivation of their actions was a highly developed sense of justice. All they wanted was punishment of culprits who, due to their position in the government hierarchy, were beyond prosecution. Not belonging to any political party, they acted out of innermost conviction and on their own responsibility. They were not so naive as to believe that freedom and social justice can be obtained by violence. They staked their own lives to vindicate the violent death of fellow creatures, a risk that only a very few were willing to take. Whoever is ready to do this does not act out of dishonorable motives. Of the thousands of anarchists whom I met from my nineteenth to my eighty-fifth year on the old and new continents, these three were the only ones who committed assassinations.

Their acts were not based on any underlying ideology. When nineteen-year-old Radowitzky punished a brutal police chief with death he did not know anything of anarchism. Durruti was not an anarchist theoretician and in Berkman's anarchist doctrines which he wrote after his action there is no trace of advocacy of violence. In contrast it should be noted that all heretofore known political systems, from autocracy via plutocracy and oligarchy and even democracy are built on



the basis of force. The only one free of force is "acracy," which could be called a system free of physical domination and spiritual manipulation if the much-maligned label of anarchy is to be avoided. History tells us of Aristogeiton and Harmodios who, in 514 B.C. assassinated Hyparch, the tyrant of Athens. And until today national revolutionary terrorists who are anything else but anarchists commit assassinations that are not ascribed to nationalism. However, anarchist assassination attempts are not blamed on the individual perpetrator but on anarchism as a system. How can this be explained? Rudolf Kraemer-Badoni believes he has found an explanation for this phenomenon. In his book *Anarchism: History and Presence of a Utopia* (Vienna, Munich, Zurich, 1970) he states: "Terror is the result of Anarchist ideology." This contention is semantic nonsense and besides smacks of historical and sociophilosophic ignorance. Anarchist ideology is basically nothing but a concept for a social order without a power elite and dominated subjects. It excludes conceptually force and above all terror, for where there are no oppressed and overlords, violent overthrow does not make sense.

To substantiate his thesis, Kraemer-Badoni refers to the resolution adopted at the International Congress of Anarchists in London, 1881, which in essence recommends "to take into consideration propaganda to promote the revolutionary idea and the spirit of rebellion by action." This resolution puts anarchism up to the present time into the "rogues' gallery." Yet up to now no anarchist has acted in accordance with this resolution. Radowitzky and Durruti had certainly no knowledge of it. The words "revolutionary actions" had a different meaning by the end of the last century for the illiterate masses, especially in the agricultural south of Europe than they have today. Then, an action—not necessarily a violent one—had more propagandistic value than newspaper articles which the masses could not read anyway.

In the early 1920s I had a very touching experience in Andalusia. In a crowded fourth-class railway car I was among agricultural workers going to their jobs, squatting on the floor and intensely listening to what a literate comrade read to them from an anarchist newspaper. They themselves were all illiterate.



The Russian nihilists resorted to violent actions against czarist despotism without any knowledge of anarchism. Bakunin and Kropotkin became anarchists in western Europe. And also the attempts of Hoedels and Nobeling to kill Emperor Wilhelm I in Berlin on the occasion of the enactment of the Socialist Laws in 1878 were planned three years before the Congress of Anarchists in London. Violent actions by anarchists after the congress can be counted on the fingers, whereas national revolutionary assassination attempts of the last decade are innumerable. Terror in general is not the outgrowth of a specific idea and the terrorist acts of a few individuals against oppression, tyrants and despots are harmless in comparison with the mass terror. The mass terror of Stalin destroyed millions of lives and the religious terror of the Inquisition swallowed hundreds of thousands of "heretics" and witches. Nowadays we are witnesses of never before suspected political terror acts of immense dimensions. The perpetrators are fanatical national revolutionaries; Latin American guerrilleros, Tupamaros, Arab fedayin, Croat Ustashis, nationalist students, American Black Panthers, in Argentina Peronist Monteneros, Trotskyites, and in addition, Marxists, Leninists and Maoists. A follower of Mao, was the Italian editor and millionaire Feltrinelli. For a time the members of the Baader-Meinhoff group called themselves Marxists; the media spoke of them as anarchists, so did the politicians. Even chancellor Willy Brandt in a radio broadcast spoke of "criminal anarchists."

This reminded me of a discussion held by August Bebel on Oct. 2, 1898 in Berlin. Then, after the assassination of the Empress of Austria by the Italian Lucheni (Sept. 10, 1898 on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland), anarchism was a hotly discussed topic. In his speech, later published under the title "Assassinations and Social Democracy," Bebel pointed out that among the fifty politically motivated acts of violence of the last two centuries, most were committed by monks, nobility, bourgeois and only a few anarchists. Without identifying himself with anarchism, Bebel said: "No class, no layer of society can pretend not to have among them perpetrators of political assassinations." I remembered these words when I heard of Willy Brandt's opinion of Baader-Meinhoff terrorists. Subsequently I wrote the following letter to the chancellor and chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany:



Munich, June 27, 1972

Dear Willy Brandt:

I was very disappointed by your radio speech about the assassinations committed by the Baader-Meinhof group. I was and am in agreement with your condemnation of terrorism. I too reject senseless violence even if politically motivated. However, I am very disappointed that unfortunately you too label as criminal anarchists sons and daughters of bourgeois families, gone wild, who profess a confused neo-Marxism and Maoism as their political faith. We all are in agreement that the acts of terror of this group, condemned by the entire German people, are criminal. The assertion that they are anarchists is evidently wrong. Such a rhetorical hyperbole is understandable from the viewpoint of a bourgeois politician but not from Willy Brandt who was a member of the SAPD [Social Democratic Labor Party] and familiar with the history of the labor movement. May I recall to you the conversation we had in the local of the Syndicalist Union Federation (CNT) in Barcelona at the time of the Spanish Civil War? You visited me in your capacity as reporter for the Norwegian labor press; I was the speaker for the Spanish anrcho-syndicalists. Then, you, like all socialists and freedom-loving people, had high praise for the Spanish anarchists who were the first to take up the struggle against insurgent General Francisco Franco and indirectly against Hitler and Mussolini. Also you were lavish in your admiration for the socialist buildup according to anarchist principles. Did you forget all this? May I also direct your attention to the fact that the anarchist principles drawn up by Proudhon, namely political autonomy of free federations with simultaneous cooperation of independent collective enterprises, are today seriously considered to be an alternative to the capitalist economy of monopolies on the one hand and to the centralized, administratively-directed economy on the other. You are probably not ignorant of the fact that outstanding German social scientists do not use the label anarchism pejoratively. Finally, I want to quote Kant who said in his *Anthropology with Regard to Pragmatism* (Koenigsberg 1798, see edition of his work published by W. Weinschedel, vol. 6, p. 686, Darmstadt 1966), "Anarchy [is] law and liberty without force."

May I, an eighty-year-old veteran of the German and international labor movement, take the liberty of advising you not to use the word "anarchism" indiscriminately? At the same time I would appreciate your giving corresponding orders to all offices under your jurisdiction.

With kind greetings,

Augustin Souchy

Willy Brandt answered:



Bonn, July 7, 1972

Dear Augustin Souchy:

Many thanks for your letter of June 27, 1972, and the book you sent me. I am far from promoting the erroneous thought that every form of anarchism is based on force and therefore criminal. Concurrently with the kind of anarchism you mentioned and represent, there exists an anarchist tendency bent on force and with this we have to deal. This fact cannot be ignored by the world and the public conscience, as much as I agree with your necessity of differentiation.

With friendly greetings,

Willy Brandt

Only a short commentary: I do not deny that there were anarchists who committed acts of violence. But Baader-Meinhoff and their comrades have declared themselves not to be anarchists. Why give them a label which they reject themselves? My doctrine: let us help all human beings to achieve prosperity; let us build a political basis which guarantees to everybody liberty and dignity; only then will force and violence belong to history. There is no remedy against psychopathic violence.



## *Chapter 11*

### **1936-1939: The Spanish Civil War**

The municipal elections of April 14, 1931 were followed by a drastic change in the political panorama of Spain. The Republicans won a majority, an unmistakable writing on the wall for the military government. The king fled, the monarchy disintegrated, the republic was victorious. All this in one day and without bloodshed. After ten years in exile the republican and revolutionary expatriates could return to Spain. The republic inherited a mess difficult to untangle. In politics the new forces were confronted with the old powers. On the right there were the discontented monarchists and falangists who wanted an authoritarian regime à la Hitler and Mussolini; on the left were the organized syndicalists (1.2 million members): the CNT with the militant cadres of the FAI who made preparations for the final battle against the old Spain. The middle was represented by vacillating republicans and procrastinating socialists who wanted to avoid an armed conflict by all means. Then there was an irresolute government who did not wish a falangist-fascist state but was more fearful of an anarchist victory. This period lasted five years and came to an abrupt end on July 19, 1936 with the military insurrection of Franco. In Catalonia and in other parts of the country where anarchists were dominant the rightist insurrection was smashed in a few days. In other parts of Spain the army, supported by Hitler's air force and Mussolini's panzers, was victorious.



## **Mobilization for Liberty**

A mass rally against the war was planned by the local syndicalist federation for the beginning of July, to which I was invited to participate as a speaker. The expansionist policy of Mussolini, the annexation of Ethiopia and his boastful blabberings about the "Mare Nostrum" were looked upon with suspicion by the antimilitarist Spanish labor movement. On July 9 at night I left Paris and arrived in Barcelona the following morning. The rally was scheduled for July 18. Two days after my arrival there were rumors of an imminent coup d'état. The information came to us from the military barracks where the anarchists had their confidants. At the head of the insurrection was—we were told—General Francisco Franco, stationed at that time in the Canary Islands. The coup was to start at the same hour in all of Spain. Instead of a peace rally the labor organizations prepared the resistance against the army. Instead of peace songs, the population of this old Mediterranean city would hear the thunder of big guns.

Feverish activities began in the union halls. Combat units were formed which could be stationed at strategically important points of the city to stall the expected advance of the army. The attack was expected to start during the night of July 18-19. Very few people were thinking of sleep that evening. I too could not remain within the walls of my apartment. At midnight and after the streets were empty and the city appeared to have fallen asleep. But the calm was deceptive. Shortly before 5 A.M. action began. General Godet ordered his soldiers out of the barracks with machine guns and cannon. It was planned to occupy public buildings and the union halls until all resistance was smashed and the civil government deposed. The Catalan Guards did not dare resist the army. Sheltered by the door of a building I watched the battle. Advancing from one cover to the other the militant anarchists, armed only with hand guns, under the battle cry "Vive la F.A.I. (long live the F.A.I.)," won a complete victory over the soldiers in spite of machine guns and cannon. It was the revolutionary battle of which I had dreamed when a youngster. I was ashamed of myself not to have actively participated. When prior to the outbreak of the struggle I asked to be accepted into a combat unit, I had to admit that I, a



forty-year-old man, had never had a gun in my hand in my life. A *compañero* (comrade) said: "Never mind that. Your word is also a kind of weapon; you will soon have a lot to do." He was right. In the following two and a half years my activities were exclusively devoted to the libertarian revolution. The battle in Barcelona lasted three days. Spontaneously organized groups of civilians, workers from factories and workshops, won a victory over trained soldiers led by generals and colonels educated in military academies. But the victory was costly in terms of human lives. Among the victims who died in battle was Ascaso, the inseparable comrade of Durruti.

But the military insurrection was smashed. In the evening of the third day of the struggle I announced victory over Radio Barcelona in French, English and German. "The freedom loving people of Barcelona and Catalonia," I said, "have smashed the insurrection, but in other parts of Spain the insurgents are in power." I appealed to the workers of all countries to lend us their support in the struggle to come. In the first days there was reason for optimism. In Madrid and Valencia, in more than half of Spain, antifascists defeated the insurrection. However, Franco was not beaten. He continued with the help of panzer divisions from fascist Italy and air force support from national socialist Germany. Due to his greater military potential he succeeded in uniting his forces from the Biscaya to the Mediterranean and to form an unbroken front from north to south, extending in an easterly direction to Saragossa, the capital of Aragon.

The insurrection turned into a civil war lasting three years. Political power relations changed considerably in republican Spain. The Anarcho-syndicalists who rejected statism wanted to uphold their position also at that time. Yet the militia, the strongest battle contingent against Franco, had to be armed. Hence they must also have the right to participate in all decisions regarding the conduct of the war, otherwise they would be pawns in the hands of the politicians. Due to their numerical strength in Catalonia, they alone could have seized power. They did not do so because first, it would have violated their antidictatorial principles; second, it would have resulted in political isolation and ultimately in their demise. This is why they decided to cooperate with all other anti-



fascist parties and organizations with regard to the conduct of the war and public administration. Abroad, anarcho-syndicalists were held to be either adherents of violence or solitary utopians. To relay truthful information to the media abroad about current events and the position of the anarcho-syndicalists was of paramount importance. This task was assigned to me.

Mariano Vasquez, secretary of the regional committee of the CNT, said to me in his deep voice: "Consider yourself as our speaker for the media abroad." On the fifth floor of the regional committee building (it formerly belonged to the influential industrial tycoon Cambo) I established my office, furnished it and published periodically a bulletin in several languages with the help of political friends who came from abroad. Here I received journalists and delegations of socialist parties and unions from other countries. To the former belonged Ernst Toller; soon afterward came George Orwell and the "red" dean of Canterbury, head of the Anglican Church, at the helm of an English delegation. They had exhibited courage to venture into the central point of the dreaded anarchists—or was it proof of our good reputation? Later on came a young German, representative of the Norwegian labor press. His name: Willy Brandt; also Nehru, later prime minister of India. They all wanted to be informed.

In the middle of July, at a time when the Spanish-French border was still guarded by anarchist patrols, Ludwig Renn was brought to my office. I could have had him sent back across the border because he had no entry permit. It was the time when Stalin had all his opponents, and also our comrades in the Soviet Union, shot (Renn was a Stalinist). However I sent him to his own Communist comrades. He was shameless enough to write in his book about Spain (*The Spanish War*, East Berlin and Weimar, 1971) that anarchists were allies of American capitalism, a calumny which did not impress us but humiliated him. One day, a commission of journalists from abroad came to me to ask for my intervention in favor of the German-Italian journalist Ludovico Strauss who was under arrest because of a homosexual affair. I picked up the telephone and said to the corresponding officer: "Bed affairs are no counter-revolutionary conspiracy; Tell Strauss that I expect him tomorrow in my office. Okay?"



"Entendido (agreed)," it came back. The next morning Strauss thanked me personally for his release.

During the first weeks and months we firmly believed in our victory. But as Franco, with the help of arms deliveries from Germany and Italy, consolidated his military position, we too had to look for arms from abroad. At the end of August 1936 I went to Paris on order of the CNT to sound out French government circles. The Spanish comrade Facundo Roca went along with me. Leon Jouhaux, secretary general of the French Federation of Unions (CGT), went with us to see Socialist prime minister Léon Blum. A high officer of the French General Staff was also present. He was in favor of our request because he was apprehensive of a Hitler front in the Pyrenees in case of a Franco victory. Léon Blum, however, thinking in terms of pacifist categories, was afraid of warlike complications which might be a sequel to arms deliveries by his country. In agreement with the British prime minister Neville Chamberlain he propounded a policy of non-intervention with the inclusion of Germany and Italy. He himself, in good faith, believed in the good faith of the dictators also. This was a disastrous mistake. In 1936 Léon Blum and Neville Chamberlain could postpone the conflagration but not prevent it. A victory of the Spanish Republic, entirely possible with quick and effective arms deliveries from France, could have weakened Hitler's lust for aggression. A successful policy of non-intervention was only possible in cooperation with democracies, not with dictatorships. Dictators understand only the language of force. They bend only to a more powerful opponent. Léon Blum's laissez faire policy made our mission a failure.

### **A Dream Becomes Reality: Libertarian Socialism**

The anarchist victors of July 19 fought the military insurgents and not for the defense of ministerial chairs and the maintenance of a private capitalist order, nor for a state capitalist monopolistic economy. They had their own concept for the future of Spain. Since the days of the First International, the Spanish anarchists, trained in Bakuninist ways of thinking, expected a just order of society, not from legislation but from efforts of their own, from direct inter-



vention of the workers in the process of production in workshops and in plants like the peasants of the countryside. Soon after the proclamation of the Republic in 1931 there were several attempts to introduce libertarian communism on local levels. This was attempted in the small Catalan towns of Mauresa and Berga as well as in Casas Viejas at the beginning of 1933. All these attempts were bloodily squashed. Even before the outbreak of the Civil War barbershops in Madrid were collectivized with participation of master and help. After fighting on the barricades subsided and work was to be resumed, owners and managers of the big enterprises had disappeared. The plants were taken over by laborers and technicians. It took only a few days for private enterprises to turn into collectives managed by their crews. A collective socialist structure replaced private capitalism. The so-called "transition period" which Lenin held unavoidable, in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat was not needed in Spain in 1936. (In reality it was the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party and not the dictatorship of the proletariat which I saw during my six-month stay in the Soviet Union and nobody could predict its duration.)

In Spain there was no mention of the dictatorship of the proletariat and yet the laborers took the management of the economy into their own hands. This was novel, extraordinary and quite different from what I had seen sixteen years before in Russia.

What was actually done in the transition period from capitalism to socialism? I asked this question of the chairman of the Public Transportation Authority of the city of Barcelona (all transportation had previously been in private hands). "Transition period?" he replied, "The new collective management was decided upon in one meeting and put into effect soon afterwards. The 5,000 Pesetas monthly salaries of managers were invalidated, as were shares of stocks and dividends. The monthly salaries of conductors and bus drivers were raised from 250 to 300 Pesetas and beyond that wages of all Barcelonans were raised by 15 percent. At the same time fares were reduced from 15 to 10 cents. School children and indigent old people could ride for free. We paid to the city and state double the amount in taxes previously paid by private enterprise. We merged all three separately run transportation



systems (street cars, buses and subways) into one transportation authority under the black and red flag of the CNT-FAI. Three months have gone by and the results are satisfactory."

Similarly collectivized were water, gas and electricity (also previously in private hands). The same goes for textile mills, metal works, commercial firms, department stores and the port authority, hotel and restaurant businesses, wholesale food distributors and others. In less than two weeks private enterprise was replaced by collective management. There were no more strikes; the unions took charge of production planning and distribution. Wage earners turned into independent collectivists.

Collectivization was also introduced for landed properties. It became common practice for farm laborers to take charge of the huge landholdings of the "Grandes" (the equivalent of the Prussian feudal lords) who had gone over to Franco. Of greater social revolutionary importance was the fact that small landholders (peasants), mindful of the new order, united into voluntary *Collectividades* and tilled the land together with other small landholders. They renounced their property title and declared all land to be common property. The products were purchased by the municipality and the proceeds distributed justly according to the needs of the individual. This was unprecedented, an experiment never before tried, neither during the Mexican Revolution of 1910 nor during the Russian Revolution of 1917. It was an agrarian reform of a singular kind, practiced without force and laws or orders from above and without any ideological basis, entirely on the initiative of the rural population.

This was the "Social Revolution," the dream of my youth become reality. I decided to take a closer look at the new collective economy on the spot. Of the more than 1,000 *Collectividades* founded up to the turn of 1936/37, I visited about a hundred in Catalonia, Aragon, in the Levant, in Murcia, Old Castille and in those parts of Andalucia still belonging to the Republic. No unified plan of collectivization for the entire country existed. The founders did not have any knowledge of the theories of Marx, nor for that matter of Bakunin. The slogan "Comunismo Libertario" was heard everywhere; every village organized its libertarian commune in its own way. In the Aragonian village of Muniesa for example the



land of all inhabitants was tilled in common. The products, including wine and also the meat of slaughtered animals, were handed over to the community administration for storage. Everybody could take whatever he needed without paying for it. For consumer goods that were not produced there, payment was required. Every adult was given one Peseta per day, for every child half a Peseta was allowed. I asked: "Does it not lead to abuse, when everybody can take of the wine as much as he wants?" "Nobody gets drunk here; everybody knows everybody; we are like one big family." This was communist anarchism as depicted by Kropotkin.

In the Catalonian village of Valls collectivism was introduced on a trial basis from harvest year to harvest year. Whoever entered the collective put his land, his cattle, tools and machinery at the disposal of the commune. In return, he was given a compensation, stipulated in meetings of the collectivists. The monetary proceeds were equally distributed. With the money thus received the collectivists could do all their shopping in stores owned collectively. If a member decided to quit after a harvest year, his land and means of production were returned to him.

Since nobody was coerced to join a collective, there were in many village so-called "individualists." The doctor in the Aragon collective village Albalate de la Cinca received food, clothing and whatever else he needed free of charge. If he wanted to go to town he was provided by the administration with the fare and also got an allowance for the purchase of professional books and instruments. In the course of collectivization of the village of Membrilla, the sum of 30,000 Pesetas in the tills of the municipality was distributed in equal amounts among the inhabitants before the impecunious communal economy was started. Although the initiative came from the anarcho-syndicalists, there were many instances where members of the socialist union UGT (Union General de Trabajadores—General Workers' Union) participated in communal work.

My impressions of the commonwealth of collectives were positive, but like all other human experiments they had some shortcomings. However, the voluntary common efforts enhanced productivity and made it possible to raise the standard of living. Social injustices were eliminated. This was the



way in which simple peasants realized the main postulates of socialism: social justice and freedom. They did it without legislation from a higher authority, without set goals of a planning commission and also without a "transitory period," only out of a sense of community conscience.

After the anarcho-syndicalists joined the Catalan regional government, the collectivization of enterprises of more than one hundred employees was enacted by ordinance of October 24, 1936. Enterprises with less than one hundred but more than fifty employees could legally be collectivized provided that at least one-third of the crew was in favor. On August 28, 1937, at a congress of collective enterprises held in Barcelona, solutions to the economic problems regarding collectives were explored. Unprofitable plants were to be closed, others modernized and production rationalized. It was also decided to build an aluminum plant and begin land irrigations in order to combat unemployment. Loans for new investments at one percent interest would be offered by a workers bank, to be created.

In January 1938, a congress of all agricultural and industrial collective enterprises of the Republic of Spain was held in Valencia. More than 1.6 million collectivists from cities and rural communities were represented; together with their families they totalled more than six million people. Under discussion were the tasks of the new economic structure. The congress resolved to prepare specific statistical data about production, consumption and the labor situation. Also discussed were propositions for rationalization and humanization of the labor process, and the just distribution of the product. While the engineers came out in favor of wages according to performance, the representatives of the rural *collectividades* asked for family wages, in keeping with the formula: "Everybody according to his needs." Finally, a compromise was reached. It was really astounding to see how union workers who, two years previously, could do nothing but organize strikes now tackled with equal efficiency problems of plant strategy and economic questions. I was present at this congress as observer. Unintentionally my thoughts went back to the year 1920: Russia after the Revolution—in Petrograd Zinoviev and in Moscow Lenin tried to convince me that workers taking charge of plants must inevitably lead



to a petit-bourgeois collective capitalism. Had the two wizards of communism been participants of the congress they would have been taught another lesson. And, had we won the Civil War then Spanish collectivism would have proven to be an extant third alternative to private capitalism on the one hand and to state capitalism on the other hand.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Tragic Events of May 1937, or Moscow's Arm in Catalonia**

In the first days of May 1937 we in Catalonia lived through a bloody battle—a civil war within the civil war—with 500 dead and 1,000 fighters wounded. This conflict was triggered off by a complex and involved situation, as a result of the contrasting tendencies of the old powers and the new forces. For the better understanding of these events a few points of the controversy should be mentioned.

After the victorious July days of the past year control patrols were organized in Barcelona, consisting of 325 anarcho-syndicalists (CNT-FAI), 185 from the Catalan Nationalist Party (Esquerra), 145 from the socialist union (UGT) and 45 from the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (POUM). When differences of a jurisdictional nature arose between the patrols and the police, the coalition government sided with the police. This angered the syndicalists.

Between the communists harking to the Moscow line who, after July 19, 1936, organized the Socialist Unity Party (PSUC), and the left Marxist POUM open hostilities of a serious nature arose. The communists called their Marxist "brethren" of the POUM traitors and allies of Imperialism—it was the time of Stalin's persecution of Trotskyites. In December 1936 the Minister of Justice, Andrés Nin, representative of the POUM in the coalition government, was forced by the communists to resign. Later on the POUM was outlawed. At the same time the communists succeeded in eliminating the adherents of the POUM from leading positions in the socialist union UGT and in replacing them with their own followers. It was the aim of the Moscow faithful to seize political power. Since they could not gain a foothold in the syndicalist workers' organizations they allied themselves with the bourgeois Esquerra. This party of the bourgeois left, compelled to make concessions to the anarcho-syndicalists after



the July victory, was hoping now to regain, with communist help, the power positions they held previously. The anarcho-syndicalist battle divisions were at the front facing the Franco soldiers; the communist cadres however, got preferential treatment in the distribution of Russian arms. The Republican armies in 1936 consisted of volunteers recruited from the unions and the political parties—later on conscription was decreed. The communists had more arms than soldiers, whereas on the contrary the anarchists and syndicalists had more fighters than arms.

The Catalonian metal workers manufactured small arms and panzers under syndicalist initiative and direction in their own factories and munition plant. On March 5, 1937 a communist assault unit, presenting false credentials, purloined ten panzers from a depot run by syndicalists. This action was the underlying cause of a government crisis. On April 27, communist soldiers shot the anarchist mayor of the border town of Puigcerda, Antonio Martín, and three of his deputies. A few days later police in Barcelona tried to disarm some control patrols. On May 3, soldiers in three lorries drove to the central telephone exchange building, run by the unions, and attempted to occupy it. Armed guards stopped them when they reached the first floor. News of this assault triggered off a violent reaction among the workers of the Catalonian metropolis. Spontaneous work stoppages occurred in industrial enterprises, stores closed and barricades were set up in the streets. Four-fifths of the city was in the hands of the workers. In the center of the city soldiers took up positions behind barricades. The groups "Friends of Durruti" and "The Libertarian Youth" were ready to attack in order to call to account those responsible for this provocation. However, members of the presidium of the regional committee of the CNT dissuaded them. In Barcelona and in the rest of Catalonia we would have won, but what would have happened then? An anarchist Catalonia could not hope to get aid in arms anywhere; we also would have been starved. Already vineyards had to be converted into fields for growing potatoes. Sooner or later our Catalonia would have been overpowered by the republican central government or by Franco's troops.

These were critical and exciting days. The regional



committee of the CNT, the headquarters of the anarcho-syndicalists, was in permanent session. I kept a diary about the current events (more exactly an hour log). For five days in a row I did not step out into the street. On our side were, next to the syndicalist unions, battle groups of the FAI and small units of the POUM. On the other side was a coalition of the nationalist Catalanian Esquerra and the communist PSUC. Formally we were—except the POUM—partners of the government; practically however, the coalition partners stood against each other as enemies. None of the battle groups tried to storm their opponents' barricades. There were only sporadic outbursts in all parts of Catalonia. To assist the hard pressed Catalanian regional government, the central government sent 4,000 men detached from the Jarama and Madrid fronts to be ready for action in Barcelona. The CNT, conscious of its responsibility in the struggle against Franco, did not detach even one man from the front lines.

On Thursday evening, May 6, we declared our willingness to evacuate the barricades, release the prisoners and renounce all reprisals on condition that the opponents agreed to the same terms. The reply was to be transmitted in two hours. The government asked us to wait because of lack of unanimity among its members. Hours went by and still there was no response. Anxiety mounted. Should our offer of reconciliation be rejected we would be forced to start action, committing all our forces. Up to this time we had hesitated to do this. Next morning at 4:15 A.M. the reply finally came. The Catalanian government accepted our offer to end hostilities. Now we could breathe easier. Half an hour later we decided to dismantle the barricades. The next day, children were playing around the remnants of the dismantled barricades. Two weeks later I published my notes about the events of that May in Spanish, French and English under the Spanish title *La semana tragica de Barcelona* (The Tragic Week of Barcelona).

The bloody conflict ended in a compromise. The same anarchists who, with unbelievable heroism, beat a superior foe July 19, 1936, showed in the days of May 1936 surprising restraint. They hesitated to fight antifascist allies. This contrasted sharply with their opponents who did not have any scruples when they killed anti-fascist comrades. Among



the many victims of this conflict were several of my personal friends and comrades. One of them was Camillo Berneri, who had been my friend for the past ten years. An Italian refugee living in Paris, Berneri came to Barcelona shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, where he published the paper *Guerre di Classe* (Class War) for the Italian volunteers of the group Durruti. A few weeks before the events reported here he wrote in an article: "Today we fight against Burgos [seat of Franco's headquarters], tomorrow we will have to fight Moscow in order to defend our liberties." A strong protest was subsequently sent to the regional committee by the Russian consul in Barcelona, Owtchenko. Now Berneri was on the blacklist of the Russian secret police, the infamous GPU. With other political friends, Berneri had his office on the floor of the building opposite the offices of the regional committee. Here Italian soldiers on furlough from the front lines spent their free time. The entrance to this building was on Place Angel and could not be seen from our window. Subtenants were the distributors of the paper, Barbieri, his wife and Tosca Paubin, the widow of a comrade who had died on the front lines. Mrs. Barbieri offered me a room in this apartment. "To cook for one more person is no bother to us," she said. I agreed in principle but postponed the moving date. This saved my life. The streets leading from the center of the city to Place Angel were barricaded by government troops and communists. The square itself was no man's land. On the evening of May 5, twelve armed men, six in uniforms of the Catalanian Mozos de Escudra (Catalonian Security Guards) and six in civilian clothes, came to the apartment and took Berneri and Barbieri away. The six wore armbands of the communist controlled UGT. Leader of the group was a civilian with a red armband and a tag, 1109. After midnight, the corpses of the two Italians were found in a nearby street. The autopsy report said that they were shot in the back. Barbieri, who never was politically active, was murdered only because he was found in Berneri's apartment. Mrs. Berneri came from Paris to attend her husband's funeral. I can still hear her outcry when I led her to Camillo's casket.

A further victim of the Stalinist terror in Catalonia was Andrés Nin. Although he was not in the government at the onset of the May conflagration, he was arrested as the spiritual



leader of the POUM. He was transported to Madrid and—as was disclosed later—murdered in the communist prison Alcala de Henares. In 1921 I disapproved of Nin's joining the Communist Party but later respected him as a dissident from Stalinism. I by no means shared his views on Marxism but admired him as a human being and his death touched me deeply.

The communists considered the followers of POUM, rightly or wrongly, to be Trotskyites and in their eyes Trotskyites were collaborators of Imperialism. Bob Smillie from the British Independent Labor Party as well as George Orwell and other Britishers came to Barcelona to fight fascism. Smillie joined one of the POUM brigades. This was, for the communists, a crime. Bob visited me several times. Rarely did I meet a youngster more sympathetic and candid and always smiling. Kidnapped during the events of May, he disappeared forever. Fenner Brockway, secretary to the I.L.P. member of parliament, came to Barcelona just to investigate the case. I went with him to the central government in Valencia, where we made inquiries with all official and unofficial departments—all in vain. The grief at the murder of our young English friend with his warm-hearted character and friendly smile—I called him "Smiling Smillie"—is still with me today.

I met Kurt Landau, a Trotskyite through and through, in Bert Brecht's Paris apartment when the latter went through a brief period of Trotskyism. As with many persecuted by the Nazi regime, for Landau, born in Vienna, Paris was only a way station in his search for a permanent place to live. A few months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War he came to Barcelona to join the fight against fascism. He stayed in the suburb of Saria where there were no barricades. After the end of the May events the illegal persecutions started there also, in spite of our accords which were disregarded by the communists. Landau felt threatened and asked me for advice. I offered him a room in the Regional Committee where the archives were kept. A few days later, on order of the CNT, I left for abroad to brief the socialist parties and unions in England, Scandinavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia on the situation in Spain. My absence was not expected to last longer than three weeks. I cautioned Landau not to leave the building. Two weeks after my departure he felt he was out of danger and returned to his apartment. A disastrous



error. Henchmen waited for him there and he was never seen again. The circumstances of his death were never clarified.<sup>26</sup>

Katja Landau, a faithful Viennese socialist, was present when her husband was arrested and was herself taken off to prison, but was released after a short time. Later, in the 1940s, we saw each other daily while working for the International Relief Committee (IRRC) branch in Mexico. Occasionally she talked to me about her experiences in Barcelona's prison. Nothing was said about Kurt's fate. I refrained from any mention of it, not wanting to open old wounds; she kept mum. The reason: she was now married to a Spanish communist.

Back from my trip abroad I was visited one day by a German who called himself Werner Meister. He said he was a Social Democrat and recommended to me a German-speaking secretary to replace my secretary who had left Spain. Two weeks later the applicant presented herself for work. I postponed putting her on for two weeks. Next day came a young French lady, Suzanne, and the following day a German-speaking man. Both alerted me against employing the secretary who they said was a GPU spy introduced by the police agent Meister. During an automobile trip from Valencia to Barcelona I saw Meister with a small valise at a crossroad. "This is a spy in the service of the communists," I said to my traveling companions, two young anarchists. "Shall we shoot him?" they asked. The road was deserted and nobody would have known. "Save your bullets," I answered. "This Judas will go to hell without your help." Thirty years later I met Selke, the man who had warned me of Meister in the International Labor Relations office in Geneva where he worked as a translator. Since I worked at that time for the same agency we saw each other frequently. He told me that the girl recommended by Meister was his girl friend but he found it nevertheless necessary to warn me. The other warner, Suzanne, got married to Rolf Reventlow, after World War II secretary to the SPD of Lower Bavaria. I never saw Meister again and suppose that in the meantime he has passed the threshold to hell.

### The Defeat

The bloody events of May caused a government crisis in Catalonia as well as in the rest of the republic. Prime Minister



Largo Caballero, who had been sent into the government as secretary general of the union UST, resigned. The new man at the helm of the government was Dr. Juan Negrín, prominent member of the Socialist Party, a sympathizer of Stalin and the Communist Party, devoted to them more than to his own party. There were three groups in his own party, the SP, followers of Largo Caballero, Juan Negrín and Indalecio Prieto. The anarcho-syndicalists declined any participation in the new government, their strength being social-revolutionary action and not politics. With a membership of 2,178,000 and 125,000 combatants, they thought to be more useful as a pressure group than in government politics. However, they were mistaken. The civil war against Franco required not only guns, ammunition and tanks, which anarcho-syndicalists could produce in limited quantities in their own collectivized plants, but also cannon and airplanes which were provided by the Soviet Union. The Russian arms deliveries went to the government and were distributed to the military units under communist control. Nonparticipation in government meant, at this juncture, renunciation of control and codetermination in the fight against the Franco putschists. Only during the second Negrín administration had the anarcho-syndicalists one man in the government (April 1938) and in Catalonia they were represented by two members. This, of course, did not correspond to their real strength and was not sufficient to make their influence carry weight. The communists were represented in the government by more members than they were entitled to by their numerical strength and according to democratic principles.

The growing influence of the communists was founded on arms deliveries from the Soviet Union and the coalition with bourgeois parties against the workers and landless peasants, and rural population. The political situation favored the counter-revolutionary power plans of the communists. On orders of the communist Governor Mantecon, military units under the command of the division commander Lister dissolved agricultural collectives in Aragon by force of arms, while at the same time anarchist columns fought in the front lines against Franco's troops. Only a short time before, Stalin had forced the Russian peasants into communes and hundreds of thousands of them were killed as alleged kulaks.



The anarcho-syndicalists had reservations on principle against a civil war within the republican camp, which by the way they could ill afford due to lack of arms.<sup>27</sup> Thus they had to swallow also this bitter pill.

At a conference of the CNT held in June 1937, five weeks after the events of May, the following recommendations were accepted: Uniform tactics in the conduct of the war, compulsory military service, overall organization of war industries with the cooperation of the unions, a security council for maintenance of inner peace, a council for development of the economy, communalization of housing in the cities and communalization of arable land, legalization of collectivization for all of Spain (up to that time they were legal only in Catalonia), and, last but not least, union control of production and distribution. The bourgeois-communist coalition government refused to accept this program. To implement this program the syndicalists would have had to use force, which would have meant another interrepublican civil war during the common fight against Franco, a risk they could not take. The situation on the front went from bad to worse. Negrín's Government of Victory (*Gobierno de la Victoria*) by the grace of Stalin turned into a Government of Defeat. During an offensive near Segovia 3,000 of 10,000 republican soldiers were lost in a single engagement. The counter-thrust at Brunete near Madrid, planned by the Russian military advisers, cost the lives of 23,000 soldiers. According to the opinion of military experts, this defeat was attributable to the faulty planning and the inefficiency of the Russian advisers. The military experts of the anarcho-syndicalists (unfortunately we had only a very few republican military professionals in our ranks) predicted that continuation of these tactics would lead to the loss of the war. The warning was justified. Franco's troops penetrated ever deeper into our territory. The Republican government, which went from Madrid to Valencia in the fall of 1936, was forced to move to Barcelona. This was the beginning of the end. The war came nearer and nearer. Air attacks became more and more frequent. Oil and gasoline dumps went up in flames. Factories and dwellings were not spared. One night at about three o'clock in the morning—I had my bed in a room next to my office at the headquarters of the anarcho-syndicalists—I was



awakened by the thunder of exploding bombs. My first thought was to run to the basement for cover. However I relented and stayed in bed meditating: what has a beginning also has an end, with one exception; when the sides of a sharp angle continue indefinitely, the distance between must also be indefinite. This example, which I read years ago in Spinoza's *Ethics*, came to my mind when I stayed awake in bed. Again a terrific explosion and then everything was quiet. Then I fell asleep. Next morning at 7 A.M. Mariano Vasquez, secretary of the National Committee inspecting the building, called through the door broken by the impact of the atmospheric pressure of the bomb explosion: "Augustin, vives?" (Augustin, are you alive?) "Yes, safe and sound," I answered and got up. It was July 1938, the second anniversary of the uprising. Our building was the target of Franco's pilots and one wing had been destroyed.

Destiny was kind to me on other occasions. One day during an air raid, when the alarm sounded too late to take shelter, a shattered glass pane smashed the arm of my companion. At another time, while riding in an automobile, my chauffeur lost an eye when a bomb exploded nearby.

In the beginning of 1939 Franco's armies were nearing Barcelona. On the morning of January 25, the enemy vanguard was at the doors of the city. Shreds of files and suspect newspapers littered the streets. Everywhere worried faces could be seen. There was only one thing to do. Go on the run. At noontime I jumped on a truck full of refugees. On our drive to the border we were constantly harassed by enemy aircraft. Women and children were crying for help. Trying to save a child from falling off the truck, I myself fell and suffered a broken arm. In Gerona, the last seat of the "Negrín Victory Government," there was complete chaos. No doctor could be found. I tried to get to the French border town of Perpignan as fast as possible. I succeeded in getting a car which brought me to France. A few hours later the border was closed. Whoever came afterwards was interned in a camp. My broken arm saved me from internment. Lope de Vega, the author of two thousand plays was absolutely right when he said: "No hay mal que por bien no venga." (Even evil sometimes has a good side). In the rearguard of Franco's troops followed Hitler's Gestapo. Some of my German comrades who could not escape



were caught and sent to concentration camps in Germany. I, however, was lucky to escape but lost my German citizenship. The official German *Reichsanzeiger und Preussischer Staatsanzeiger* No. 121, issue of May 30, 1939, published the following information: "Pursuant to the law of May 14, 1939 Augustin Souchy has been deprived of his German citizenship." Since I never had the slightest sympathy for a Germany dominated by Hitler, this loss did not mean anything to me. Some time before I had been awarded Spanish citizenship in recognition of my contribution to the cause of the Spanish Republic.

Again in France, I resumed my job as correspondent for Swedish and American newspapers. Except for a short interlude in England where, upon the invitation of Fenner Brockway, I lectured in a summer school of the Independent Labor Party, I lived in Paris until the outbreak of World War II.

Fenner Brockway was the most outstanding person I ever met. When England during World War I introduced compulsory military service he was jailed as a conscientious objector. Later he was one of the leaders of the Independent Labor Party. After World War II he was knighted and made a member of the House of Lords in spite of his advanced age (89). He is active in the movement for social progress. His life and work should be an outstanding example to idealistic youth.



## Chapter 12

### 1939-1942: France

In January 1939 I escaped internment. However, at the outbreak of World War II all Germans living in France were rounded up and sent to internment camps in the interior of the country. Our group of about eighty persons was sent to the village of Marolles, near Blois on the Loire. We were not required to do any work, but the younger ones among us volunteered to help the peasants bring in the harvest while we older ones helped out in the kitchen. An Austrian lawyer was chef and I peeled potatoes. I organized some sort of entertainment each weekend and established contact with the villagers, which made life a bit easier for me. We were quartered with several peasants. The group to which I belonged—about twelve persons—were living in a hayloft; our bedding was straw. The village roofer, a socialist, gave me a board and a wire net. I put straw in between, covered it with sackcloth and made a primitive couch which served me as a bed. I lent this contraption to fellow internees whenever they were visited by their spouses. The village priest who took a liking to me gave me permission to use his library, where I spent some time reading *Cinna* by Corneille (1617). There I found a passage that has a stunning similarity of thought to a passage in Goethe's *Faust*. Following my propensity to learn verses which I liked by heart, I jotted it down:



Quand nous avons quitté ce jour qui nous éclaire  
cette sorte de vie est bien imaginaire  
et le moindre moment d'un bonheur souhaité,  
vaut mieux que cette froide éternité.

In German translation:

Scheint uns das Tageslicht nicht mehr,  
dann ist jenes andere Leben imaginaer,  
und der kleinste Moment eines ersehnten Gluecks  
gilt mehr als jenes kalte und eitle Nichts.

The quotation from Goethe's *Faust*:

Das Jenseits mag mich wenig kuemmern  
schlaegst du erst diese Welt zu Truemmern,  
Die andere mag danach erstehn  
Aus dieser Erde quellen meine Freuden  
Und diese Sonne scheint meinen Leiden.

To cheer up my fellow internees I wrote a parody of the then-favorite hit song "Die Liebe der Matrosen" (The Love of Sailors) which was cheerily sung at the end of entertainment evenings like the national anthem after patriotic gatherings and the "International" after proletarian meetings. Trivial as all hit songs, it corresponded to the taste of a group brought together by coincidence, a community of people with a variety of cultural propensities and backgrounds. The commander of the camp liked it so much that he asked me to translate it into French.

I stayed half a year in Marolles. In keeping with an ordinance that exempted men over 48 years of age and married to a French woman from compulsory internment, I was freed and permitted to return to Paris. But I could not enjoy my freedom very long. A new ordinance ordered all men and women born in Germany back to camp. My new internment camp was situated near the village of Audierne near the coast of Brittany not far from Quimper. We were housed in the building of a former cannery. There were no single cells but the place still had the appearance of a prison. I developed a bladder infection from sleeping on the cold bare cement floor. We were faced with a cheerless monotonous camp life.

Since everything was improvised, no plans were prepared to keep us busy. Lack of activity engendered prison psychosis. Our group was a replica of society outside with its economic and cultural differences. Some played poker for



high stakes, people who had money had the pariahs do their washing. Rudolf Olden, former editor of the *Weltbuehne*, played chess with the Austrian writer Leo Lania. Days, weeks and months were dragging on. The French guards told us that the Germans had occupied Paris, that the French government had fled to Bordeaux, that Maréchal Pétain had formed a government subservient to Hitler and that General De Gaulle had organized resistance in London. To prevent an invasion from the seaside the Germans occupied the entire coastline. An army group advanced from the north of the coast of Brittany had occupied Quimper and was nearing our village.

There was consternation among the interneés. Most of us, political or Jewish refugees, had much to fear from the German occupation. At the request of the other refugees I went, together with another man, to the camp commander. "We are friends of France," I said, "my nearest relatives are French. You are not going to hand us over to our common enemy Hitler." The commander agreed with us in principle but replied that he could not free us without an order from his superiors. I replied: "The government does not exist any more; the sham cabinet of Petain does the bidding of our enemies."

The commander hesitated. The German troops were only a few kilometers away from our camp. Uneasiness was pervasive and anxiety threatened to turn into revolt. At last the commander gave in and permitted us to leave in groups of five. Too late. The first group had to turn back. The Germans could already be seen. One wall of the factory was next to a wheatfield. There was our escape route. We helped each other to climb the wall. The former Bavarian socialist deputy Hoffmann was too heavy to make it and had to resign himself to whatever destiny lay ahead of him. I succeeded in jumping to freedom in spite of my forty-nine years. We hid in the wheatfield until darkness descended. Then everybody left singly. Groups would have run the risk of getting caught immediately. My next objective was the family Le Gall in Quimper whom I had met twelve years before through a most unusual circumstance. It was in 1929 in Berlin, when my wife—born in Paris—came home from the French bookstore with a young French woman who had just lost her position



as a private teacher in French because she did not have the Parisian accent that was desired. Her name was Germaine and she was the daughter of the school superintendent of Quimper, Le Gall. She stayed a few weeks with us until she landed another job. In the following years we used to spend a few days of our vacations in Quimper with the Le Gall family.

"You saved our daughter from the dangers of a big city in a strange country," said M. Le Gall after listening to my story, and besides, "For us you are a Frenchman." Mme. Le Gall lend me her bike which I took for a ride to Paris. I went by way of Saint Nazaire where an acquaintance of mine, a comrade I knew from a syndicalist congress, got me a French I.D. Not one of the German noncoms controlling the entry and exit of villages suspected me of being a German. The peasants for whom I was a refugee from northern France gave me bread and milk. When the weather was clear I slept in the open; when it was raining I took shelter in cow stables and even pigsties. The ride took four days. In Paris again the concierge, seeing me back, wrung her hands and said, "Monsieur Souchy, les Fritz [that's how the French referred to the Hitler Germans] were looking for you. Just be careful." I could not stay with my family and found a place in an attic in the first arrondissement not far from Châtelet. Paris was thoroughly changed. In all sectors there were innumerable posters carrying the ominous inscription "Verboten" and below you could read the many things that were forbidden, threatening severe punishment in case of transgression. Those who knew German pointed out the phonetic consonance of the three syllables "ver-bo-ten," which sounded, with the French pronunciation, somewhat like "vers-beaux-temps" (toward beautiful times). Indeed the times we were expecting should be anything else but beautiful.

My situation was very serious. I could find no way of earning a living and furthermore I could not apply for ration stamps to buy food. I was constantly in danger of being discovered by the Gestapo. My friends advised me to go to the unoccupied zone in central or southern France. In Vierzon, the last German occupied city in a southerly direction, I found a friend who helped me get across the demarcation line. He and his son worked in the city but lived in the free



zone. Like him, hundreds of workers went back and forth each day. During the rush hour the control was not very strict. My friend and his son passed the control point, then the son went back and brought me his father's I.D., which I was supposed to use. There was, however, some risk involved, since the photo of the identification paper showed a somewhat thick-set man size 1 m.66cm. with a round face and black moustache and bald spots on the head. My size was 1 m.72cm., my face oval and my hair full and blond. With a calculated nonchalance I produced the I.D. and opened it deliberately very slowly. The control officer looked at it with equal nonchalance and motioned me on impatiently. There was a long line behind me. The deceptive maneuver was a complete success. In Brive-La-Gaillard I helped out with the vintage. After this I was without work. My next stop was Toulouse, the center of the Spanish Civil War refugees who only occasionally were able to eke out a meagre living. Here I did not have any chance. Marseille, the giant port city on the Mediterranean, was the last hope of all refugees from European dictatorships and there I went. In the offices of the International Relief Committees there were thousands upon thousands of Italian, Spanish, German and Jewish refugees waiting patiently for help. Many of them had escaped from concentration camps. Here—though not unexpectedly—I saw my old friend Voline again. His first emigration lasted from 1905 to 1917; the second started in 1921 and would last until the end of his life. His wife—unable to stand up to the rigors of this errant life—died early and his children were scattered all over the world. He earned a meager living as a cashier of a movie theater and during the day he worked on his magnum opus, *The Unknown Revolution*. Near his bed in a small hotel room papers and documents lay scattered around. He did not have the help of a secretary and did not own a typewriter. In spite of all these handicaps he finished his work. However, he did not live to see publication of *La Révolution Inconnue*. He died of consumption. His book was published after the end of the war and translated into several languages.



## *Chapter 13*

### **1942-1948: Mexico: Third Emigration**

#### **Difficult Arrival**

Mexico agreed to admit the Spanish Republicans who escaped to France. As a refugee from Spain conquered by Franco and as a citizen of Spain I could avail myself of this opportunity. At the beginning of 1942 nobody could foresee the duration of the war nor its outcome. Mexico meant the end of persecution, insecurity and danger.

It took two months to complete the necessary formalities: entry permit to Mexico, exit permit from France, and receipt of travel money which I expected to come from the United States. A French Mediterranean liner brought us to Casablanca where we were transferred to the Portuguese ocean liner *Sao Thome*. In Jamaica the boat was stopped by British officials and the passengers scrutinized. Only Harry Domela, impersonator of the son of the German crown prince and convicted for fraud during the Weimar Republic, was apprehended. All other refugees, about 700, were permitted to proceed. On April 15, 1942 the *Sao Thome* docked at Vera Cruz. The passengers born in Spain were immediately given entry permits and left the ship the same evening. Thirty-four passengers not born in Spain were refused landing permits. I was among them. We were utterly dismayed. The information that several months ago refugees on a ship under similar circumstances were refused permission to land in several Latin American countries and had to go back to Europe increased



our anxiety. Why didn't they let us in? The fact that one or the other used a false passport to escape the misery of his refugee existence could not be the reason. The captain declared that he would soon be under obligation to weigh anchor because his company did not want to pay additional port fees. We contacted officials of the government and relief committees. The Jewish Central Committee of Mexico City—thirty of us were Jewish—sent two delegates to Vera Cruz to assist us. I got in touch with my Spanish friends whom I met when I was secretary to the International Workers Association. We were promised action soon. Yet day by day went by without anything happening. On the strength of my mandate from the International League for Human Rights, which I was given during the Spanish Civil War by the Secretary-General of the League, Professor Victor Basch of Paris, I sent the following telegram to the President of Mexico, Avila Comacho:

Thirty-four antifascist refugees, men, women and children, provided with valid entry visas issued by Mexican embassies in France, are at this time held back on the Portuguese liner *Sao Thome* in the port of Vera Cruz and not permitted to enter Mexico stop Please do everything to get us landing permits. Thank you.

Another cable was sent to the representative of the Refugee Committee, Indalecio Prieto. After nine days of anxious waiting our destiny was still uncertain. My Mexican friends were ready to bring me ashore alone. On the evening of April 24 one of them boarded the ship and told me that they intended to get me to Mexico on the sly, during the night. However, I could not accept this generous offer. Among all those rejected I was the only one with a political past. My fellow refugees put all their hopes on my actions; I could not disappoint them. But the captain would not wait any longer than ten days. A decision had to be made within the next twenty-four hours. So it was, and it was a decision favorable to us. After receipt of my telegram, Roger Baldwin cabled to an English M.P. a request for intervention. On April 25, the English edition of the Mexican paper *Novedades* carried a notice which caused great joy to all of us:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the House of Lords and other prominent personalities of London who asked President Avila



Comacho to issue entry permits were notified that their request was granted.

Everybody relaxed; fears and somber predictions were quickly forgotten; hope and great expectations could be seen on every face. A refreshing dip into the cool waters of the Gulf of Mexico brought much needed relief.

A few days later Mexico declared war on Germany, that is, the Third Reich. The German Nazi House on Calle Lopez in Mexico City was seized and handed over to the Federation of Mexican Farmers. Hitler's portrait in the patio was replaced by a stone statue of peasant leader Emiliano Zapata. Well known Nazis were apprehended and interned in the old fortress of Perote. The new situation had changed our status too. We no longer were permitted to reside in the capital but sent to the city of Puebla, a stronghold of Catholicism. Here even freemasons are churchgoers. In nearby Cholula there are—without exaggeration—more altars than dwellings.

My job as correspondent for Swedish newspapers made it necessary that I reside in the capital. The well known union leader Enrique Rangel, whom I had known since 1929 when we both were delegates to the Latin American syndicalist conference in Buenos Aires, was now a member of congress. He went with me to the Minister of the Interior, Miguel Aleman (the future president of Mexico) and presented me to him with the following words: "A German revolutionary, an old anarchist wants to help with the educational work of the unions. I would appreciate it greatly if you could grant him a residence permit in the City of Mexico." The minister shook hands with me and said: "Le felicito Compañero" (Congratulations comrade). This was the equivalent of an immediate residence permit.

Mexico was at that time, next to the U.S., the preferred country of political refugees from Europe and other Latin American countries. Here Trotsky found political asylum when no other country wanted to accept him. Here I would see again Spanish, German, Russian and Italian comrades whom I knew from earlier years of my political activities. Unexpected however, was the reunion with Jack Abrams, who, after the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt of 1921, had come with many others to Berlin to escape persecution by the Bolsheviks. Before World War I he lived in the U.S., but



was deported for his active support of the Russian Revolution. "Do you remember," he asked me, "that you helped me to illegally cross the border from Germany to Belgium, when the latter refused to grant me a transit visa? You sent half of a letter cut zigzag to Aachen and gave me the other half which I showed to a comrade in Aachen [the border town] who led me safely across, so that I could continue to Antwerp, whence I boarded a ship to Mexico." Twenty years had gone by since then. Abrams settled in Mexico where he established a printing shop and was president of the Jewish community. For the first weeks of my residence he gave me one of the rooms in his apartment. After Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France and Spain, Mexico would become my new home for two decades, a country which I appreciated and learned to love.

### **Socialist White Horse and Capitalist Black Horse**

Mexico then was the center of the Spanish Civil War émigrés, whose meetings I attended regularly, especially those of the anarcho-syndicalists. Expecting that the defeat of the Axis would soon be followed by the collapse of the Franco regime, a Spanish Government in Exile was formed. Unfortunately however, our hope was soon shattered. A Spanish Republic had been written off by Roosevelt as well as Stalin. Mexico remained for most of the Spanish émigrés the end of the line.

Soon after my arrival I established contact with the Mexican unions to whom at this time I was an unknown entity. I helped with educational contributions. One of the lectures I gave was about collectivization and socialization during the Spanish Civil War. One of these inspired Enrique Rangel to organize a conference on economics. In Mexico there was a union ideologically sympathetic to anarcho-syndicalist ideas. According to their principles the aims of the unions should be not only to fight for higher wages and better working conditions, but also to prepare for the takeover of production. During the tenure of former President Lazaro Cardenas hundreds of factories, mines and services were taken over by the workers and managed as production collectives. This was taken as a variant of the collectivizations initiated during the Spanish Civil War.



The war had brought about other changes too in Mexico, above all in the realm of the economy. The emphasis of North American industry on arms production was followed by a decrease in the export of consumer goods. Mexican shoes and textiles were now exported to the U.S. Nevertheless Mexico still remained preponderantly an agricultural country. But agriculture was suffering from an underdeveloped infrastructure. The revolution of 1910-1917 brought political liberties and to the natives the right to own arable land, but industrial backwardness still prevented, or at least considerably slowed economic and social progress. In South America pineapples rotted in the fields because of lack of sufficient means of transportation and canning plants. The villages had no electricity although the Papalo River had potentially gigantic power reserves. Exploitation of nature's wealth required capital and skilled labor. The unions had a sufficient manpower reservoir and explored new avenues of income-producing potentialities. To that effect a congress was held in Jalapa (capital of the state of Vera Cruz) and I was its technical advisor. A resolution was prepared advising the building of a canning plant for tropical fruit, construction of automobile roads across the jungle and of a power plant. We fervently believed that the socialist white horse could outpace the capitalist black horse. Mexico, we thought, was a land of revolution, nay, the Latin American land of revolution par excellence, since nine-tenths of its people's representatives belonged to revolutionary parties. Shouldn't it, under these circumstances, be possible to achieve social progress without capitalist exploitation? A delegation of the congress presented the resolutions to the then governor of Vera Cruz. The governor endorsed them but the state of Vera Cruz did not have the financial means to implement them. It was surmised that only the Mexican national government was in a position to provide the necessary funds. The union approached the president of Mexico only to be told that the national treasury also had no funds for this purpose. Month by month went by without any result. Meanwhile private enterprise took up the cudgel. The first canning plant was built by a private capitalist company; a little later a second was added. Finally one was built with government funds but without cooperation from the unions. Thus it turned out



that the capitalist black horse was faster than the socialist white horse.

### **Tracing the Mexican Revolution**

Mexico was in a state of war with Germany but the Mexicans remained Germanophiles. "If Germany wins the war," a congressman from a revolutionary party said, "the Gringos [North Americans] will lose; then we are going to take back New Mexico, Arizona and Texas, which the Yankees took away from us in the past century." "How many people live in Germany?" a union leader asked me. "Around seventy millions." His answer: "When seventy million go to war against the entire world, they must be some guys." Hitler was, for the Mexicans, the best of all Germans. I tried to correct these misconceptions whenever I could. After the crushing of the Warsaw ghetto uprising I organized a meeting in the name of the "German League for Human Rights" in cooperation with the unions, to which I invited the president of Mexico, who unfortunately could not attend, but sent a telegram of sympathy. The meeting was held in the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Arts). I wanted, among other things, to point out that not all Germans were killers of Jews.

Soon afterwards I began to give a series of lectures in the south of the country which would take me away for several months. In Mexico's southernmost port city of Salina Cruz on the Pacific Ocean a Committee of Civil Defense organized a cultural evening in the Theater Alcantar. My lecture was given with a typical Mexican background of music, declamations and dances. I was introduced to the public as "Caballero de Libertad" (Knight of Freedom). I spoke at first about the war aims of the totalitarian powers and then about the peace ideals of the democracies. After the meeting, on the terrace of a beach cafe on a mild tropical night, the mayor told me about the thrilling days of the Mexican Revolution in which he was an active fighter. The old revolutionary felt very bad about the fact that there were still prisons in Mexico one-quarter of a century after the revolution, but in his city he had introduced a very mild penal system. The following day I had the opportunity to convince myself that his statement was true, by inspecting the city jail. On a shady place in the jail courtyard I saw inmates play cards. Food was brought in



by relatives. Adjacent to the dormitory was a room, separated by a curtain, to permit undisturbed intimacies when spouses visited. In the event of important family affairs the convicts were given short leaves. Among the imprisoned men was a Swedish sailor who, during a drunken spree was guilty of a minor violation of the law. When I returned to Mexico City sometime later I presented his case to the Swedish consulate. Shortly afterwards the sailor was released. The Chomula Indian on the marketplace in Simojoval Chapas from whom I bought a cup of coffee tasted it first to make sure that it was to the liking of a Gringo. When I paid and dusk became night, I saw under the light of a kerosene lamp that the woman was covered with a white rash typical of leprosy. According to the recent newspaper reports there were about 20,000 leprosy victims in Mexico, most of them not in leprosy homes. I had taken my coffee from a cup which a woman afflicted with this disease had touched. The city doctor who chanced to be in the same tavern told me that the rash of this market woman was a harmless eczema. However, when he said that whiskey was the best remedy against malaria and asked me to stand him a glass I lost confidence in his diagnostic ability. A somewhat intoxicated man at the next table talked about gold veins and amber on his land in the mountains, which he could not exploit because of a temporary shortage of money and asked to take part also in our whiskey feast at my expense.

Since I did not own a mosquito net I rubbed my entire body with kerosene before going to bed to be protected from malarial mosquitoes. When I finally fell asleep I saw in my dreams a procession of leprosy victims. Above the entrance to a door which the cortege, led by the doctor with a whiskey bottle in his hand, approached there was an inscription in big letters, words from Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "Lasciate ogni speranza voi qu'entrate" (abandon all hope you who enter here). The market woman, last in the procession, took me by my hand and dragged me along. When she tried to cross the threshold I tore myself away from her. At this point I woke up. It was a meager consolation to me when, later in Mexico City, the Spanish physician Dr. Arenas told me that the incubation period in leprosy could be seven years. Twenty-five years later a French senior physician of a



leprosy home in Madagascar said that leprosy is not always contagious.

The commander of the southern defense zone in Oaxaca to whom I was recommended by Enrique Flores Magón, one of the fathers of the Mexican Revolution, bade me a very friendly welcome. "Help us to instill idealism into our young people," he said. "The youngsters nowadays join the army because in the barracks they learn to read and write, which gives them a chance for a better paid job at the end of their term. But they lack the revolutionary élan that we had when we were young." The commander was a General of the Revolution, a man of the people.

Never had it occurred to me that I, a draft resister and evader of 1914, would end up thirty years later lecturing at a meeting presided over by a general and attended by hundreds of soldiers, about the war aims of the totalitarian powers and the peace guarantees of the democracies. The "velada" (the Spanish expression for such meetings) was held April 10, 1943 in the hall of Macedonio Alcalá in Oaxaca, capital of the province of the same name, land of the Zapotecs who gave the world the first Indian president, Benito Juárez (who, in 1867, had Emperor Maximilian executed).

What happened to me? Had I abandoned my pacifist ideals? Pacifist Mexico of the 1940s could not be compared with the militaristic Germany of the World War and the time after the war. When Mexico entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1942, compulsory military service was legislated and went into effect. The patriotic duty of the draftees consisted however in reality of two hours of gymnastic practice daily for young men who used wooden sticks as a symbol for rifles. Later, when a Mexican military unit joined U.S. troops in their fight against the Japanese to symbolize Mexico's solidarity with the Allied cause, a typical Mexican joke was making the rounds: Twenty Mexicans overwhelmed a hundred Japanese soldiers, took them prisoners of war, and disarmed them. But they returned to base with only one prisoner. And what about the other 99? "This stingy guy was the only one who refused to pay ransom," was the answer, alluding to the "mordida," the proverbial corruption practice.

Before the start of my trip I had private meetings with Otto Ruehle, Victor Serge and the Frenchman Marceau



Privert to discuss with them and also in public meetings the new world order after the war. I published my own opinions in a brochure with the title *Finalidad de Guerra y Garantías de Paz* (Aims of the War and Peace Guarantees). This brochure contained the fundamental principles of the topics of the lectures I would be giving:

1. freedom of speech, press and the right of assembly in all countries;
2. abolition of passports and freedom of movement from country to country;
3. multilingual classes in countries where there are border areas of different nationalities;
4. revision of all history textbooks, ultimately aiming at giving the presentation of an objective historical background of events and advocating reconciliation of all nations;
5. stipulation of an International Legal Code on the basis of freedom and equal rights for all people;
6. internationally controlled disarmament and, at the same time, international supervision of armament industries in all countries;
7. no declaration of war or warlike action without a previously internationally supervised plebiscite, and this should be preceded by an international campaign of information;
8. radical efforts in all countries of the world to lessen and eventually abolish poverty with emphasis on support for underdeveloped countries; agrarian reform and a system of just land distribution;
9. establishment of an internationally organized just distribution of raw materials in cooperation with unions on local and international levels;
10. creation of an international commission of experts to elaborate a way of lifting international customs barriers and introduction of a European and international currency;
11. international agreements to increase and equalize social security for wage earners;
12. repudiation of colonial domination and the right of all peoples to self-determination without interference from outside.



Fantasies of a young immature idealist? Maybe! But at that time I was already fifty-one and many older men were obsessed with similar notions; for instance H. G. Wells, the well-known author of *The Time Machine*, published a book during World War II where he proffered similar ideas. Today, thirty-five years later, some of my suggestions are becoming reality.

In my lectures I tried to conform to the cultural level of my Mexican audience and avoided abstract formulations. I found an understanding crowd, many areas of contact and a fluid human sympathy. I had of course also to deal with local problems from time to time. "Muy bien" (very well) shouted the teacher of a small town during one lecture, "but when is construction of the road next to the railroad station to begin?" He was not angry when I could not answer this question.

In the village of Desperamadero (Oaxaca), about three hours march from the railroad station of Loma Bonita, fifty "Ejidatorios" (peasants who had recovered portions of community land) and their families planted corn, beans, rice and pepper plants. They had, in addition, a small number of coffee trees as well as some sugar cane. Also cattle were raised on a small scale. A month ahead of the rainy season a pilgrimage is made each year to Our Lady of Catemaco to pray for rain through her intercession, a prayer that is promptly answered. She never fails. Three months after the rain ends, the harvest is ripe.

"You have very valuable arable land; why don't you form a collective and buy a modern tractor with a corresponding plow?" I asked. "You could work more land, increase your harvest and consequently your income." "¿Por que?" (What for?) We have what we need." was the answer. "But you have no school in the village!" "We once had a male teacher and also a female teacher, however they did not stay long. Since then the government has stopped sending us teachers."

In 1922, 4,000 acres of land which belonged to the American Agricultural Company in Loma Bonita were distributed among the landless. The shoemaker, son of a farm worker, got his share too but he did not till it because he preferred his trade. Typical for him was the Spanish proverb: "Zapateros a tus zapateros aún que paras males ratos" (cobbler,



stick to your trade). "Did you too get your share of the land distribution?" I asked a man who I saw weeding a pineapple field. "No Señor. I came two years ago from the Sierra. The local government wanted 600 Pesos for one Ejidal share; if I had that kind of money I would buy ten acres from Mr. Pethers at the price of 200 Pesos each to be paid in installments, but with my low wages I will never get that far." Mr. Pethers, son of a Swabian immigrant to the U.S. was a pioneer of the Mexican pineapple growers. He and several other farmers came to Mexico in 1908 from the U.S. These Yankees brought pineapple seeds and pineapples from the Caribbean islands. When the revolution erupted they left in a hurry. Pethers was the only one who returned after the revolutionary turmoil subsided, and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the growing of pineapples. He was held in high esteem by the population of the town and helped the natives wherever he could, leasing parcels of land at low prices and forgiving the rent to needy families with many children. When he died in his eighties, a school was named after him. Loma Bonita, "the beautiful hill," became for more than a decade my "buen retiro," a place of retirement and meditation. Here, Dr. Pedro Vallina, a legendary figure of the Spanish freedom movement, established a medical practice after his escape from Spain. In his home I wrote my book, *Night over Spain*, for which he gave me many valuable hints.

### Among Huicholes

At a conference of the "Libertarios" in Mexico City, delegates of Nayarit invited me to give some lectures in their region. The first I gave to a group of "Akrates" in the city of Santiago Ixcuintla on the Pacific coast, situated a few hundred kilometers to the north of Acapulco. The "Akrates" (from the Greek, to reign without force) were social reformers whose aim was not to seize political power but to advocate the regeneration of human society. Their founder was Gustavo Leal, who had only three years of elementary school but later got himself a higher education by studying alone. During the day he worked in his father's shop, forming pots and pitchers with a hand-driven potter's wheel. He carried his products to market in a basket on his head.

Santiago was the seat of a UNESCO school, where I was



lecturing in peasant collectives. This topic was of great importance to me because I found that there were hardly any collectives among the farming population of Mexico. This was in contrast to the many collective enterprises (production and services) in mines, factories and transportation. The headmaster of the school, Señor Bonilla, held that the Mexican campesino (farm worker) was not yet ready for collective methods. I replied that in order to learn swimming you have to get into the water.

For lack of a meeting place in the town of Yagon I gathered an audience in the barbershop of a political friend. The glaring light of a carbide lamp attracted many people from the street who listened with interest to what the foreign paleface had to say. When the meeting was over, a mariachi (street singer) gave me a few coins—exactly as he was wont to get after a performance.

In Tuxpan, a dreamy little village on the Santiago River, tobacco planters squatted at dusk at the front door of comrade Verdin's house to discuss the purchase of another book for the library. Suggested were: Ruben Romero's novel of the Mexican Revolution, *My Horse, My Dog, My Gun*, Upton Sinclair's *King Coal* and Kropotkin's *Prosperity for All*. Chosen was the Kropotkin book. The planters were too poor to contemplate purchase of books individually. After the lecture Verdin's wife came to me with her child in her arms and asked me, "What is the difference between culture and civilization?" My answer: "Dear Petra, civilization is the way of life, customs and mores of your tribe; culture is your own endeavor for the acquisition of knowledge and everything that enriches and beautifies your life. You are born into the one but have to work for the other." "Bueno," said the intelligent "Hinochilin," "you are bringing culture."

In Tepic, capital of the state of Nayarit, I gave a speech in the shop of the cabinet maker Baez. The audience was sitting on joiner's benches and unfinished furniture. A sweet scent of gardenias and coffee buds from the garden came in through the open door. During the discussion the philosophizing cabinet maker said, "We had no lack of revolutions in Mexico; our last one opened the door to progress but ignorance closed it again. A people of illiterates cannot govern itself."

In the fishing village of San Blas I was awakened before



sunrise by a melodious "Mañananita" (a custom brought from Spain to Mexico; it is sung before sunrise) that a group of streetsingers offered to the sweetheart of one of them. It was time for me to get up because I had a date to join a shark hunting trip. At the beach I saw the cadaver of a giant shark, fifteen meters long. The meat of this old animal was too tough to be used for fish filets but the liver could still be used for oil. I still remember that, as a child, I often, and rather reluctantly, had to drink liver oil but that it was made from the liver of a shark was news to me. The hunt itself was very dangerous. The water was full of hungry animals. The leader of the hunting party hit a shark in the flank with his harpoon. The animal pulled away and the water became red with blood all around. As quick as lightning the other sharks disappeared from the surface; some dived underneath our boat which began to rock dangerously. "Rapido, rapido!" shouted the harpooner to the steersman (both young men under 20), and told me that once it happened that the boat overturned and the passengers disappeared into the stomachs of the animals. The boat left the perilous place in a hurry. When the danger was over and we went ashore my companions took me along to church to offer prayers of thanks for the lucky escape. At the entrance of the church a vast crowd awaited us. I could not trust my ears when I heard the priest say in a rather shrill voice: "Jews, Freemasons and Protestants are the enemies of Catholic Christendom." And that in Mexico where there has been separation of church and state since 1857, where presidents are Freemasons, where instruction in religion is not permitted in public elementary schools and where priests are not allowed to wear vestments outside the church. Now I understood why the Spanish theater manager—as he told me in a café in Mexico City—had to give 10 percent of his receipts to the church when a performance was scheduled in the province. Not to do it would result in empty seats.

### On the Marijuana Island

The marijuana plant was not imported to Mexico; it is homegrown. The word marijuana is of Aztec origin. The café Tenampa Plaza Garibaldi in Mexico City was at that time the central meeting place of the marijuana dealers. Anyone



repeatedly caught selling it runs the risk of deportation to the island of Maria Madre in the Pacific. I was in Mazatlan, a picturesque port city, and waited there in the home of a political friend, Flavio Perez, for permission to visit the island. Flavio offered me his bed; he himself slept with his son on a simple cot. In another room in the back slept the mother and four half-grown girls. Every morning Perez's father pushed his cart with a hand-squeezer to the church to sell orange juice to the faithful after morning mass. Then he went to get wood for the oven of the primitive tortilla bakery which his wife and youngest daughter were running. The other two daughters were apprenticed to a seamstress. In spite of all the strenuous work the family lived on the brink of poverty. They were in no way religious people but family life was very harmonious.

"When you get to the island do not forget to bring me back a 'Lori' (parrot) Flavio said. The passage to the island with the delightful climate took one night. The inmates were nearer to the heaven of marijuana than to the doors of hell. They were not very closely guarded and managed somehow to grow marijuana on the island and to smuggle it outside. Room and board was free, and prison garb was only worn by the poor. The wealthy ones could wear civilian clothes. The barber of the island—under life sentence—lived there with his family in a comfortable bungalow made of cedar wood; there was a flower garden in front and a chicken coop in the back yard. The prisoners spent their time catching parrots, manufacturing earrings from seashells and purses from snakeskin. They also carved small statues which they sold to visitors. Marijuana sickness did not exist, according to the statement of the physician, although everybody smoked it. Lack of women was the most serious problem. There were hardly 30 of them here among a prison population of 700. Married couples lived in family bungalows. The governor was right when he said, "You are safer from theft here than on the outside!" My jacket was hanging in the hallway all day and I found it in the evening in the same place, completely untouched. The man who sold me the parrot for Flavio did not have any change when I paid him. "Would you trust an honest man?" he asked. "I shall go and get the change and bring it to you in the office." The same evening he brought the change to me on board ship because he could not find me



anywhere else on the island. Overjoyed with his "Lori," Flavio started right away to teach the bird the slogan of the Mexican Revolution: "Tierra y Libertad" (land and freedom).

### With the Yaquis

No other Indian tribe defended its freedom as fiercely as the Yaquis when the Spanish conquerors penetrated their territory. It took 67 years to subjugate them. Likewise during the revolution at the beginning of the century the Yaquis were the most dreaded warriors. It was told that under their chief, Pluma Blanca (White Feather), they not only took the scalp but also skinned the entire body of their captured enemies. I was told that it is not very difficult to get into Yaqui territory but there is no guarantee that you can get out alive. I read a book written by the Yaqui poet Ambrosio A. Castro who describes the monotonous grey of his sun-burnt country in picturesque language and who sees in the gnarled Mesquite tree a bewitched hero.

There is nothing to fear from a tribe which defends itself from the clutches of a foreign conqueror out of love for their country. I did not let myself be intimidated. The first Yaqui village to which I came looked as if it was deserted. Men, women and children worked in the fields or at the construction site of a canal. Only occasionally the barking of a dog could be heard. Finally I saw an old Yaqui in front of his hut who, with his beard, looked like a South European peasant. He carved small beads for rosaries out of a wooden stick. Soon I could see that reality looked quite different from legend. As faithful Christians the Yaquis practiced the medieval rites of Spanish Catholicism. During Holy Week passion plays were performed during which the actor playing Christ is bloodily mishandled as he has to expiate the sins of mankind. The children are married off by their parents in complete disregard of their own inclinations. The penalty for adultery, in earlier times death, was still whipping at the beginning of the century. On the death of a husband the widow has to abstain for fourteen days from meat and milk. Movies and the experience of young Yaquis returning home from seasonal work in the U.S. changed all these habits slowly. Two thousand Yaqui families inhabit a small strip of land ninety kilometers long with a dry hinterland, on the Gulf of California. A U.S. offer



to construct a dam was declined for nationalistic reasons. Thirty years later the project was undertaken by the Mexican government. During my stay there the construction was nearing its completion. One hundred and thirty thousand acres of dry land will be irrigated and 300,000 kilowatt hours of electricity produced. Every Yaqui family received fifteen acres of irrigated Ejidal land. Cotton and wheat are the main products.

In Vicam the chief, Molino Rubio, to whom I brought American cigarettes and who in turn gave me a carved ritual mask, did not value the Ejidal system at all. "The Ejidal bank," he said, "pays 1,500 Pesos for a ton of cotton, whereas you can get as much as 2,300 Pesos on the free market." Young Yaquis returning from seasonal work in the U.S, prefer to buy with their savings their own parcels of land. Economically the irrigation paid off in better corn quality. Production increased considerably and the Yaqui country became the granary of Mexico. The once dreaded chief, Pluma Blanca, now old and sick, was bedridden on a primitive cot. Above him on the wall hung the colonel's hat offered to him by Pancho Villa. His daughter, who was also his nurse, complained as any other housewife of high prices. Gone are the days of the romantic Indian!

### Interunion Controversies

One day in Mexico City I had a reunion with a Spaniard whom I previously met on the refugee boat that brought us to Mexico. "Your friend, union secretary Rangel, ruined me!" he shouted. "How come?" I asked. "I started, as you know, a small shoe factory with the help and financial backing of my close compatriots. When, after two years, I finally got rid of my burden of debts, the workers demanded pay increases which I thought were impossible to grant. They went on strike. When it came to the labor court, Rangel was their representative and won the case. The strike lasted almost two months. I was ordered to pay full wages also for the strike days. When I was unable to do this the sheriff attached the machinery and I lost everything." There was also an ironic side to this story. The Spaniard came from Mallorca and was an expert shoemaker; in Spain he was secretary of his union.

As a result of labor troubles there were shutdowns of



plants almost daily. Labor laws in Mexico accorded the wage earners important rights. A street in the capital is named "Articulo 123." This is the article in the revolutionary constitution pertaining to the protection of labor. According to this law pickets are entitled to police protection. Hiring and firing of workers is subject to review by the respective union. The union boss has, as in the U.S., a very influential position with the workers. One example: one morning the union secretary of a pottery plant came to me to discuss particulars of a lecture I was to give. After he had left, my cleaning woman Juana who had overheard our conversation, told me that the father of her youngest child worked in the same plant but did not pay child support. The secretary scolded him in my presence for his failure to meet his obligation. He started to pay but soon he started looking for another job and disappeared. It happened also that the general public was hit by internecine union conflicts. One night the workers of the power plant in Mexico City went on strike because of some union disagreements. The syndicate of movie actors refused to lend any more films. Darkness fell over Mexico because the families of power plant employees had to forego the weekly free movie performances. In the textile mill of Orizaba bloody clashes occurred between members of a dissident new union and members of the old union. Result: one dead and several severely injured. Conflicts between employers and employees have economic causes; those between workers have a purely human background.

### **With Small Landholders in Baja California**

The Governor of Baja California, Braudio Maldonado, approved of my plan for adult education. I was to give at first a lecture to school inspectors and students about the cultural relationship between Mexico and the Scandinavian and German speaking countries of Europe. Mexico at that time was gripped by an education euphoria. Under the slogan of "hacer patria" (to make the fatherland), a nationwide drive to abolish illiteracy was initiated. Every Mexican who could read and write should teach his art to those who could not. The Union of Hippodrome in Tijuana decided to build a new elementary school at their expense. Baja California belongs to the culturally highest developed provinces of Mexico. The



grade of development of its capital, Mexicali, situated near the border and which, in 1910, still did not appear on the map, is unbelievable. It began during the revolution. Ferdinanco Roldan gives a realistic description of events in his book *El Otro Mexico*. He writes:

During the time of the revolution the Governor General Cantu did not have enough money to pay his soldiers and officials and for the construction of a road. One day a Chinese gentleman came to visit him: "Would you do me a favor, Mr. Governor?" "And what should it be?" "I want to introduce a new medicine, and for this I need your permission. I will tell you bluntly: it is opium." The Governor was stunned. He had to decide between his conscience and the destiny of the city.

"I thank you Governor, and here are the five thousand dollars." With the opium import came bustling Chinese and prosperity. Shops, restaurants, cafes were established out of nothing. However, under the governorship of Cantu's successor, Rodriguez, the borders were closed to opium as well as Chinese. The second phase of Baja California's development began during the presidency of Lazaro Cardenas. He expropriated (against indemnity of course) the large American landholding companies. Ten thousand acres of land were sold under very favorable purchase conditions to small peasants, and 90,000 acres were distributed as Ejidos to propertyless campesinos for free. In 1955 cotton was grown on 750,000 acres. Today Baja California is the largest cotton-growing province of Mexico.

In Trevino, an hour from Mexicali by car, I spoke under the shadow of an oak tree to a group of campesinos about collectives. They were farm laborers back from work in the U.S. who wanted to invest their savings by establishing themselves as "Ejidatarios." I told them about peasant collectives in Denmark, the collectives of French and Italian winegrowers, and mentioned also the condition of the Russian "muzhiks" before the revolution and during Stalin's forced collectivization attempts during the civil war, and the Israeli "kibbutzim." I did not forget to mention also my experiences with the voluntary collectives during the Spanish Civil War and also my experiences with Ejidatarios in the southern part of Mexico, 4,000 miles away.

I was asked to stay on—I was already a Mexican citizen—and help the Ejidatarios build a collective. Being 63 years old and also because of the extremely hot climate I did not feel myself up to this task.



Baja California is desert land and Mexicali is one of the hottest cities of the globe. For years not a drop of rain had fallen. During the summer of 1955 several hundred people died of heat stroke. Tlaloc, the Aztec rain god, has no power here. The cotton fields were being irrigated with water from a dam in Arizona, in the United States, at a price of 12 Pesos (at that time about one dollar U.S.) per acre. From two yearly harvests three tons of cotton per acre can be gathered in, which gives the owner of twenty acres a medium income. There is also a dark side under the perennially blue sky of Baja California. An Ejidatario showed me his cotton field on the banks of the Rio Colorado. The pillar of a bridge was sticking out in the midst of the stream. "The sad remnant of a short-lived bridge," my guide explained. "The bridge was built under President Miguel Aleman. This was the only pillar made of cement; all the others were wooden poles covered with mortar, and when the floods came they could not withstand the waters and they collapsed. But this is not the only case of deception. The Governor had an automobile road constructed leading to our fields to which we had to contribute five Pesos per ton of cotton. It turned out that only the beginning and the end of the road were solidly built. In the middle there was desert sand barely covered with tar which soon dissolved. We then contracted the road construction with an American firm. We contributed fifty Pesos per ton of cotton but now, as you can see, we have a solid road."

### **Wetbacks and Tolerance Zones**

Mexico had granted the concession of a small border crossing zone that extended deep into its own land to its big neighbor on the north. Fifty kilometers behind the political border was the customs frontier. This was a necessity for the provisioning of its border population. The lateral roads run through the United States. Here dollars as well as pesos are taken in payment. The wages are lower than in the U.S. but higher than in the interior of Mexico. The Mexican campesino takes from the automobile junkyard of his American neighbor a defective tractor and uses it after it is repaired. He still likes to work with this contraption in preference to a team of oxen. Abandoned wooden houses from "Yanquilandia" are rolled over the border. Butter becomes a staple



food, even for workers and peasants. Food is not wrapped in newspapers anymore. The jeep replaces the mule. Still Mexican agricultural laborers cross over into the country of the high wages, some legally and some illegally. The illegal immigrants—estimated to be more than a hundred thousand yearly—swim across the Rio Grande or Rio Bravo and are called “Wetbacks.” Theoretically illegal border crossing draws a fine of \$500; practically however, this law is never applied to the wetbacks. If they are discovered they are sent back to the other side. An effective surveillance of the 2,700 kilometer long border requires about 16,000 border patrolmen and would cost over \$100 million. The American farmer prefers wetbacks because he can pay them lower wages. American and Mexican unions are discussing this problem but they cannot do anything because the wetbacks are not organized.

*Zona de Tolerancia:* such is called the zone where things are tolerated which are prohibited anywhere else. In the northern border towns of Mexico the tolerance zone is the source of a very lucrative—if not the highest—income. According to a survey made by newspapers of the capital there are in Ciudad Juarez sixty ladies’ bars per square kilometer open day and night. Three thousand easy-going ladies ply their controversial trade here. At carnival time—when I visited this town—one such lady was chosen beauty queen. In Tijuana—the wretched city of the world—the entertainment business is a source of handsome revenues according to the vice mayor Menese. These ladies belong to the Society for the Control of Venereal Diseases which is not as paradoxical as it may appear at first sight because who should be more interested in prevention than the servants of Cupid? Most of the visitors to the brothels come from the other side of the border, the U.S., but there are also Mexican laborers returning from seasonal work in the U.S. where they had to contend with a frugal monastic life, living it up with wily Mestizo girls who relieve them of a great deal of their hard-earned money. That the church does not take a stand against this abuse is understandable. No church taxes are levied in Mexico. The sellers of love are most devout Catholics who gladly give the tenth part (tithe) of their income to the church, hoping for forgiveness of their sins and thus buying a place in heaven. Hence the church spreads the veil of secrecy over the activities of their sinful Magdalenas.



## The Humanitarian Mexico

As a former prisoner in Sweden (World War I) and internee in France (World War II) I was very much interested in the penal system of Mulega, a place a thousand miles to the south, which I was unable to visit due to lack of an automobile road leading to the prison. The anthropologist Rolden gives an interesting description in his book *Biografia de Baja California*:

From the outside it appears to be a prison like many others. Inside however, it is quite different from all other penal institutions. No guards at the entrance; the cells open and empty. I saw only one man. "Good day Sir, are you employed here?" "No Señor, I am a prisoner." "The only one?" "No, there are forty men here." "Where are the others?" "At work, some picking dates, some are fishing, others help in the construction of a new hospital behind the hill." "And the guards?" "They are also working. No, the prisoners do not have to be guarded; the guards do their work just as we do ours. Sometimes we work together." "But who is guarding you?" "We guard ourselves." "And nobody escapes?" "Nobody!" "And you do not work?" "Oh yes, I guard the prison building."

This description reminded me of a visit to a prison camp of the Spanish anarchists during the civil war near Teruel. There likewise was no distinction between prisoners and guards. All of them did the same work, got the same food and had the same sleeping accommodations. A fascist prisoner was visited by his wife and both got permission to go outside the camp alone. In the southern part of Baja California, more than a thousand miles away from civilization, there was, as Rolden writes, no crime. The individual did not separate himself from the community. The inhabitants of this strip of land say proudly: "Criminals also can be reborn morally when taken in by the cleansing atmosphere of this peninsula."

## Creed and Customs

I shall not tell of demons or exorcists, nor the sort of stories which are used to benefit Hollywood film makers, but of the mythical creed of an old people, its rites and customs that still endure in these times of space flights. The popular belief of Mexicans of all classes in the inner sense of life and death is a mixture of pre-Columbian fragments and Jewish-Christian religious dogmas. The cosmogenic conceptions in the holy book of Maya, the *Popul Vuh*, are very similar to



those in Genesis in the Christian Old Testament. The highest god brought the light, separated water and earth, created plants and animals and formed the human body from clay. Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec god, is embodied in a winged serpent, an expression of the unity of all living creatures. The earth-bound creeping animal and Icarus taking to the air form a mythical symbiosis.

The religious rites of the Aztecs are similar to Christian customs. Newborn babies are sprinkled with water and named after demi-gods; older people confess their sins to a priest and they believe that the skeletons of the dead can be reborn with blood from the gods. Historically and chronologically interesting is the collective psychosis that, in the middle ages, befell pagan Aztecs and Christian Europeans alike. When in the fifteenth century in Europe witches were burnt at the stake. Aztec priests in temples on top of pyramids tore hearts out of the living bodies of prisoners of war as a sacrificial offering to the war god Huitzilpochtli.

In the middle of the past century however, separation of church and state was made into law. Nevertheless, up to this day 90 percent of all Mexicans consider themselves Roman Catholics. There are no classes in religion in elementary schools, but every mother sends her child to communion when it reaches the age of ten years. The belief that higher powers rule the life of individuals is deeply rooted in the Mexican people. In automobiles, above the driver's seat, there is usually a picture of Christ with the inscription: "Dios es me copiloto" (God is my copilot). With the picture of a saint as copilot, driver and passenger feel much safer. When on overland drives a difficult stretch of the road is safely made, the driver drops a few coins into a box attached to a cross which for such occasions is erected on the road. The religion of the Indios is a mixture of faith and superstition. In a small mountain village of the Sierra Madre Occidental I was sleeping outside of a hut on a hammock suspended between two trees next to my horse when at midnight the father came out of his hut with a bundle of blessed rods to chase away the evil spirits which burdened the soul of his child dying of wound fever. In another village a Zapotec Indian hung a tomcat on a tree by its hindlegs in the strong belief that after the animal perished his wife who was suffering



from malaria would be cured. In the capital, of course, such superstitious behavior belongs to the past but people are still not entirely free from it. After the funeral of the mother of one of my friends the place at the set table where she used to sit was left empty. Before starting the meal the relatives prayed on their knees before the house altar for the peace of her soul. The coffee was poured into what used to be her cup for her spirit was still among us and enjoyed the aroma. The old Spanish church holidays have been Mexicanized. At Easter time passion plays are performed in the village of Oxtapalapa near the capital city in the manner of Oberammergau. In the churches the body of Christ is laid on a bier with an imitation of clotted blood on his wounds. On Easter Sunday Judas figures are smashed to pieces. During World War II a Judas figure in Hitler uniform was suspended on a rope in a very busy business street. The crowd was punching it and in the end it was blown up by a built-in explosive charge.

All Saints and All Souls days are celebrated in a strange way. Puppets in the form of skeletons are manufactured and offered for sale. Chocolate letters are placed on marzipan and sugar skulls with raisins in the eye sockets. These chocolate letters in memory of a Maria, Pedro or Pablo are taken into the mouth and put on the tongue to melt. On November 1, the morning coffee is taken with so-called "cakes of the dead." In tradition-bound families cooked food is put on the table, so that at the witching hour the deceased mother, father, etc. can enjoy its flavor. On the following day, the food is carried to the cemetery and eaten at the graveside. After the repast, the favorite song of the deceased is sung. At the entrance to the cemetery there usually is held a fair of the dead for the living. There is the smell of meat grilled on a charcoal fire, hot tortillas, pepper sauce seasoned with garlic, burning wax candles and the sweet scent of gardenias and red carnations. All this epitomizes the unique lifestyle of the Mexicans. The evening is spent by watching the film version of Zorilla's *Don Juan Tenorio*.<sup>28</sup> The end of the adventures of this bold woman seducer Don Juan is marked by flames of hell shooting up from the depths on the left side while on the right side a ladder leads heavenward. Lucifer and Ines fight for his soul. The sinner repents and finds forgiveness. A



symbol of innocence shows him up the steps to paradise. Then the curtain falls. "Are our religious traditions not beautiful?" the wife of my friend Benito, with whom I had spent the Mexican All Saints Day, asked.

### On the Traces of B. Traven

During my Mexican exile years I went also to Acapulco to visit the house in Camino del Pie de la Cuesta where the legendary B. Traven spent several years. When I came there, I was told that the "gringo" had moved to Mexico City. On my return to the capital I wrote him a letter recalling to his mind that some time ago I recommended him to my friend, the Swede Axel Holm—who was also my publisher. At the same time I let him know that I was now in Mexico and would very much like to see him in person. My letter remained unanswered—a further proof that the author wanted to guard his anonymity.

In the Café Tupinamba, Calle Bolivar, Mexico City, the meeting place of writers, journalists, theater managers, bull-fighters, Spanish exile politicians and intellectuals, there was once a discussion centering on Traven. I held forth the opinion circulating in Germany that Traven was identical with Ret Marut.<sup>29</sup> while another comrade, with reference to the novel *The Bridge in the Jungle*, opined that Traven was really Esperanza Lopez Matteo, who later committed suicide out of despair over an accident that left her an invalid. It is only fitting to the overall picture that Traven did not follow an invitation by the president of Mexico to accept a medal awarded him in recognition of his books about Mexico; he preferred to pass it up.

Traven had the same dislike for publicity as my Mexican friend Jacinto Huitron, advisor and follower of Emiliano Zapata during the revolution. When Huitron attended a memorial and heard of the intention to honor him with a medal he left the banquet stealthily. He said to me later: "I did not fight for awards but for the liberty and the well-being of the people." In his Mexican novels Traven gives a masterly portrayal of the rough realities of a country, exotic in European eyes, with rich ethnic variants and far-reaching social contrasts. His art of narration is not fictive but realistic-expressionist; I found this out during my many long travels



in Mexico. With one casual remark: "She works hard and eats little," Traven characterizes, in his novel *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, the unmistakable attributes of the Mexican Indian woman. Likewise, the topic of his novel *The Death Ship* is based on reality. Political and social emigrants saw in postrevolutionary Mexico a country of liberty and good life. Captains of several shipping companies accepted anyone on their small steamers without passports as long as they were able to pay the fare. Most numerous among the emigrants on the "Death Ship" were people from San Francisco's Chinatown. Hundreds of unregistered passengers left the California city on the "Death Ship" and sailed down the coast to the Tropic of Cancer around the Cape San Lucas and up the Gulf of California to the mouth of the California River into the land of promise. Not all of them reached their goal.

Decades later one could meditate on the graveside of the Chinese about dream and reality, hope and disappointment of those who, on their way through the desert, died of thirst. However, those who survived contributed a great deal by their diligence and perseverance to the development of the city of Mexicali. Whether Traven was a crew member on the "Death Ship" or merely a passenger, or whether he gathered the material second hand, is a secret which he took with him to the grave. With us however, is still what he said in this novel: "I do not need a passport. I know who I am."

### **I Want to Overthrow the United States Government?**

After an absence of two and a half years, which I spent on lecture tours in France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Italy, Israel and Yugoslavia, I returned in 1952 to Mexico. A Swedish friend working in Mexico whom I knew from World War I, bought in the state of Vera Cruz a piece of land between the cities of Cordoba and Orizaba with neglected orange, banana and coffee plantations. It was entirely uninhabited. There I retired for several months. My sleeping accommodation was a hammock that I brought along to this half decayed Indian rancho. Coffee beans were not ripe yet, so I made my morning coffee from leaves. For lunch I picked bananas and for dinner I had oranges and mangoes. The daughter of my Aztec neighbor brought me every day freshly baked maize cakes. The flora was wonderful, the fauna amusing, only the red



ants bothered me quite a bit, but I left them alone—after all this was their home and not mine. Under these circumstances I wrote, sitting in front of the hut, my book about Israel in Spanish (*Il nueva Israel, un viaje a Kibbuzia*). Far from modern civilization and the noise of automobile horns but also without the comfort of electric light, I enjoyed the sight of the snow-capped peak of 6,000 meter high volcanic Mt. Orizaba. I planned another trip to Europe in 1955. Again I went to the U.S. consulate to apply for a transit visa. The consul showed me my book, published in 1922 in Chicago, *The Workers and Peasants in Russia: How Do They Live?* and asked me whether I was the author of this book. The answer being yes, he refused to issue a visa. The official acted in accordance with the laws of his country. However, what I did not know was that, in the meantime, the McCarran Act had been put into effect. This law (McCarran-Walter Act of 1952) barred entry into or transit through the U.S. to persons who, in the past or at present, were or are connected with radical revolutionary socialist and communist movements, unless they have severed all connections with these movements and declared themselves “defectors.” This act was retroactive for five years, which means that the applicant must have severed his affiliation five years previously.

What to do? Should I take the very expensive and time-consuming way via Brazil to go to Europe? I did not want to do this. I begged friends in the U.S. for help, and they did try to be of help. There followed for many months an exchange of letters between me and my friends. What it was all about is best demonstrated by a letter which Serafino Romualdi, Washington, D.C. secretary of the A.F. of L. (American Federation of Labor) Committee for Cooperation with the Latin American Unions, wrote to Simon Farber, editor of *Justice* (organ of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York), a periodical to which I had contributed many articles:

Dear Simon,

At last I received information from the State Department in the matter of Augustin Souchy. In short: the State Department found out that Souchy, although an anticommunist, is or was an anarchist who, under the McCarran Act, cannot be admitted to the United States of America. The official whom I did contact



was a few weeks ago in Mexico City and briefed Stefansky [attaché to the American Embassy in Mexico; his wife was the daughter of a political friend of Emma Goldman] on Souchy's visa application and the ways open to him to overcome his difficulties. Two steps are possible: First: The State Department could ask the Department of Justice to accord Souchy the special status of a person whose stay in the U.S. is in the national interest. This decision, however, rests with the State Department. In my opinion it is not likely that the State Department would do this unless it is certain that Souchy is voluntarily ready to have himself declared a "defector." If he elects to do this he would have to declare that he is not an anarchist and has not been an anarchist for the last five years. In my opinion "anarchist" is, according to the law, subject to different interpretations. One of them is that persons cannot be granted entry visas who advocate the forcible overthrow of the government.

My answer was: "I am not sure that Souchy, a man of high moral standards and just pride in his political convictions, would submit to such humiliating conditions just to get a permit to enter the U.S. However the decision is up to him. I propose to tell him to first get in touch with Stefansky before deciding one way or the other.

I did all in my power to help Souchy and I am satisfied to know that, if not for the McCarran Act, he would have been granted a visa long ago. Furthermore, I do not think that Roger Baldwin of the American Civil Liberties Union could, under the present circumstances, obtain more than a declaration attached to mine and those of other unions, to the effect that an entry permit to Souchy could not be considered an act inimical to the interests of the U.S.

signed: Serafino Romualdi,  
Latin American Representative of the A.F. of L.

In a long letter dated March 15, 1956 I thanked Romualdi for his efforts on my behalf and gave him an outline of my ideological point of view. With respect to the use of force, I wrote in this letter: "I never used force, never participated in forcible actions of others, nor did I theoretically advocate the use of force. As a young man I was Tolstoyan and today, at age 63, I also reject acts of violence." I quoted the historically famous words of the Bishop of Soissons to Chlodwig, King of Franks: "Incline thine head, proud Sicambre, burn the Gods that thou worshipped, worship what you burnt,"<sup>30</sup> and continued: "I do not recant. My gods were neither hatred



nor force; they were and are: love and tolerance, honesty and justice, liberty and peace for mankind!"

Many months went by and there was no answer. It took over a year until the State Department finally was ready to grant the visa for which I had applied. I do not know what prompted this change of mind. I do know however, that I am not a "defector" and my name is still on the blacklist. When I applied again for a visa a decade later, the consul had to first ask the State Department; the answer was positive. It appears that now officialdom was of the opinion that I do not have the intention to overthrow the U.S. government by force.

### 1976: Again Mexico

At the beginning of 1960 I gave my steady residence in Mexico up. When, in the summer of 1976, one and a half decades later, I toured the U.S. I was in New Orleans and could not resist the temptation to make a side trip to Mexico. During a ten-day stay I came to know the Mexico of today and make comparisons with the Mexico of the 1940s and 1960s. I of course revisited the Anthropology Museum of Chapultepec Park, the most beautiful and important institution of its kind in the entire world. The newly constructed subway of the capital is an architectural beauty. This in no way surprised me in a country of three famous painters of frescoes, Diego Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, who I happen to know in person. Industrialization has made great strides and the standard of industrial workers has very much improved. In other sectors of the economy however, progress has been less spectacular. The social problems of the agricultural workers still remain unsolved, in spite of the agrarian reform of half a century ago. This was the sore point and I focused all my attention on it.

Coincidentally, there was, during my stay, a meeting of 4,000 peasants from all parts of the country gathered to organize a union of small landholders. On the last day of the congress, August 9, the birthday of Emiliano Zapata, the legendary hero of the Mexican agrarian revolution was celebrated. The fathers of this revolution of 1910-1917 left a heritage which their sons did not properly handle. Some did not want to, others were unable to do so, and still the majority of the campesinos live in poverty. A substantial part of



the peasants planted and harvested—in other words worked—their land for only four months a year, while the climate should have made it possible to gather three to four harvests a year. In 1940 Mexico City had a population of only two million; in 1976 however, twelve million. How can a developing country cope with a population shift of that magnitude? In addition to the population shift within the country there is a steady stream of emigrants who, even if they are illegal immigrants in other countries can earn a better living than at home. In August 1976 the Mexican press reported that the government in Washington, D.C. intended to expel 400,000 illegal immigrants, most of them Mexicans, mainly in order to put labor contractors out of business. The news was received with the utmost consternation. To offset its ill effects the Mexican Department of Agriculture declared that 500,000 acres of land in the states of Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo will be distributed to landless peasants. This was a praiseworthy action but a drop in the bucket. There are no exact figures available but it is estimated that more than a million landless peasants are waiting for land.<sup>31</sup>

I observed with regret that the emancipation of the Indian campesinos progressed at a much slower pace than I had expected two decades before. This is certainly not due to the absence of a proletarian dictatorship. The causative factors are manifold: one of them is the "human factor," others are abuse of power, bureaucracy, corruption on the one hand; indolence, servility, lack of initiative mixed with distrust in their own ranks on the other. The ebbing of the spirit of rebellion in the masses of the postrevolutionary period favored the desire for usurpation by the leaders. The Mexican campesinos did not build collective settlements to rationalize and increase production like the immigrants of Israel, they organized no "collectividades" like the Spanish peasants during the civil war, no "cooperativas" like the Portuguese agricultural workers after the overthrow of the dictatorship in 1974.

Agricultural collectives in Mexico were organized by decree from the government and the president respectively. There were very few based on the initiative of the peasants themselves. In my opinion, the modernization process of the Mexican farmer will be a process taking many decades. The



political refugees with whom I first came to Mexico thirty years ago have become used to the ways of life here; in other words they are "Mexicanized." A former mason has become a well-to-do contractor, a newspaper vendor is now an art dealer, another one is manager of a publishing house and the fifth one owns a chicken farm with 12,000 laying hens. I visited this place near the capital. He was not a big landowner, not an exploiter of labor; the small piece of land did not belong to him, he had it on a leasehold, and worked it together with his spouse, the lovely Carmen, and two well-paid helpers. Exploited and enslaved, however, were the only real producers of this enterprise—the hens—and even their waste was utilized. They certainly were well fed, but confined singly in very narrow cages that left almost no room for movement. Concentration camps for animals—the likes of which I had seen before in Israeli kibbutzim. I pitied the poor animals. *Homo sapiens*, where is your humanity?



## *Chapter 14*

### **Cuba: Before and After the Castro Revolution**

#### **1948: Prerevolutionary Cuba**

The Libertarian Movement of Cuba (Movimiento Libertario Cubano) with whom I had been in contact for many years invited me to attend their second congress, held in Havana from February 21 to 23, 1948.

Without direct active involvement in the struggle for the conquest of political power, the movement initiated the fight to improve the social conditions of the underprivileged, and to create a free society. It was an open, undogmatic organization which consisted mainly of young idealists active in the unions of the workers, peasants and student clubs as well as in ethnic groups. The libertarian movement of Cuba rejected any form of dictatorship, even a proletarian one. The congress advocated a collectivist form of the economy and social order on the basis of free and voluntary production and consumer collectives and autonomous communes. United under this structure they seek to bypass the power concentration of the state. This is a program thought to be well within the possibility of realization. Specifically emphasized were the problems of the poor country population.

Nineteen forty-eight was an election year in Cuba. The term of President Roman Grau San Martin had expired and the campaign for election of his successor was in full swing. At issue were not party programs but personalities. Pictures of candidates were displayed all over the country. The parties



wanted the best man at the helm but were at odds over the question of who the best man was. Finally Carlos Prío Socarras, a member of the revolutionary party, was elected president. For eight years Cuba had presidents elected by the people and a democratic regime. Then, in 1952, former president Batista seized power by a coup d'état and held it until he was deposed by a general upheaval in 1958. Since 1959 Cuba's dictator has been Fidel Castro.

During my lecture tours in the provinces after the congress I found that the living standard of workers and peasants was much higher than in Mexico, despite monoculture and a one-sided economic development. A Cuban returned after a prolonged stay in the U.S. said that he earned much more money there but that the Cuban social security system is more progressive than in Yankeeland. This was eleven years before the seizure of power by Fidel Castro.

I visited first the eastern part of the country and came to the sugar cane plantations around Jatibonico where I lectured to a union meeting about consumer collectives. The National Sugar Control Council created in 1937 was instrumental in improving the conditions of all employed considerably. The wages were higher and working conditions better than in all other Latin American sugar plants. A problem however, was the slack period. The season lasted only six months. In the meantime the workers had to struggle along and make ends meet by buying food on credit. Now they expected to ease the hardships of the interim period by organizing consumer collectives in the hope of obtaining credits from the wealthy consumer collective of the electrical workers in Havana. After my lecture the by-laws of the new organization were drafted with the help of a lawyer. For the underemployed however, no solution has been forthcoming. Additional employment opportunities would have been possible only by new agricultural enterprises or industries but there were not sufficient funds available. Our arrival in Guantanamo coincided with the annual peasant reunion. White and darkcountry people (Guajiros) came by the hundreds on horseback to the town, and in front of the city hall a speaker praised the struggle for liberation and of course the national hero José Martí, the apostle of "Cubanity."<sup>32</sup> Remarkable in East Cuba is the guttural pronunciation of "r," doubtless a linguistic



influence of neighboring Haiti where a French dialect is spoken, for in the rest of the Hispanic world the "r" is rolled with the tip of the tongue.<sup>33</sup> The morning after the peasant meeting we went on our way on horseback and, passing through steep and stony mountain paths, muddy pools, past citrus trees, coffee plantations, mahogany forests, we arrived after a day's ride at our destination, the Colony Monte Rus. Compañero Fernando Ruis, my guide, continued on a two-day trip over the mountains to meet the "Precarist" Alvarez to inform him of the definite grant of his piece of land.<sup>34</sup> The next day a hurricane, typical of the Caribbean islands, swept over the country and the heavy rainstorms made it impossible for Comrade Ruis to travel and I had to wait for him for several days. This gave me an opportunity to get acquainted with the history of the colony.

It began in 1910 with the arrival of groups of Spanish freedom seekers to whom the Libertario Campus belonged. Under the influence of the theories of Kropotkin and the experimental colony of Robert Owen, they founded a libertarian commune based in the eschatological belief in the early victory of the revolution which will be the beginning of a new era. This colony was to serve as a model for the future renewal of the social order. This was the goal for which they labored. They bought twenty-five acres of land at the price of \$25 per acre and started working on it. It was a difficult task to convert soil overgrown with wild tropical vegetation into coffee plantations, especially when capital and labor were in short supply. Mules were the only means of transportation for tools as well as the shipping of coffee. The colonists hoped that perseverance and energy would lead to success. Years went by with hard pioneer labor but the social revolution did not materialize. The original enthusiasm began to ebb and hard realities supplanted the waning ideals. Half of the colonists were discouraged and gave up. Those remaining decided to dissolve the commune. The collective was turned into family ownership. Comrade Campos at the congress of the M.L.C. in Havana offered to give a few sacks of coffee to his political friends—who were persecuted under Hitler—as a gesture of sympathy. But due to transportation difficulties the coffee did not arrive before my trip. Now I could take it over on the spot. All the members of the colony contributed



to the gift to their German comrades. When the hurricane was over Fernando Ruis returned from his mission. Two sacks of coffee were loaded on the back of a mule, our horses were saddled. "Un saludo para los compañeros alemanos," shouted Salvador, the son of comrade Campos. After a stay of four months in Cuba I returned to Mexico.

### Towards a New Era?

When, at the turn of the years 1958/1959, Radio Buenos Aires announced the flight of Batista from Cuba, the editor of the libertarian periodical *Reconstruir* lifted his glass of Mendoza wine to the liberty of the Cuban people. We did the same, enthused by the victory of the revolution. A year before, the ringing of churchbells in Venezuela greeted the downfall of the dictator Perez Jimenez. No doubt the days of dictators were numbered as the days of liberty began. We looked forward with optimism to the new era.

I spent the entire year 1959 on lecture and study tours in Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil. Everywhere I stood up for the revolution in Cuba. The Cuban people overthrew the dictatorship and was about to free itself from the economic overlordship of the U.S. This was the impression of the peoples of Latin America. The political liberation was thought to be only the first step, to be followed by the second step: the social emancipation of the underprivileged. The leaders of the revolution promised to do away with all the social evils. There were, on the other hand, different opinions about the ways and means to achieve this goal. The Cuban libertarians let it be known that they disagreed on many points with the dictatorial policy of Fidel Castro. Eleven years had gone by since my first visit to Cuba and many things had changed. True to my old habit of relying only on my own experiences, I decided on another trip there to get first hand information on the progress of the Cuban Revolution.

When I arrived in Havana at the end of March my Cuban friends welcomed me cordially. For them I was no foreigner, no outsider. Soon I participated in their activities, attended union and other meetings and spoke at reunions of revolutionary organizations. I gave the formal address at the first of May meeting of the electrical workers of Havana. I emphasized my experiences during the revolution in Russia in 1920



and in Spain in 1936-39 and strongly stressed the importance of the defense of freedom. "Experience has demonstrated," I said, "that leaders of revolutions easily turn into dictators when the revolutionary élan and the vigilance of the masses subside." I appealed to everyone to maintain revolutionary initiative and pointed to the paramount importance of the unions.

With this statement I opened a hornets' nest and came into conflict with Che Guevara, who advocated dissolution of the unions because, in the social order, namely communism, that he and Fidel Castro proposed to build, there would not be any exploiters and exploited and the state would take care of everybody and everything. In a message printed in *Solidaridad*, a periodical of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, of May 15, 1960 I said:

Greetings to the Cuban Revolution!

I came to see the achievements of the Cuban Revolution. In the few weeks that I have been here I have found that the Cuban Revolution is much more than a mere change of government. It is a deep transformation of society. In some respects it is similar to the Spanish social revolution of the civil war. Yet there is a difference. In Spain the peasants themselves took the first steps toward socialism in that they worked the land in common and distributed the fruits of their labor justly to all members of their collective. And also the workers in the cities converted private enterprises into collectives under their own management. However, the social changes in Cuba came from above. The agrarian reform was decreed by the state and put into effect by the government. Likewise, the nationalization of factories and enterprises in the cities was ordered by the government. In Spain it was the collective that was the dominant feature; in Cuba the centralized state economy. In Spain the initiative for the revolutionary changes originated with the workers and peasants; in Cuba with Fidel Castro and his guerrilleros. The Cuban guerrilleros are unselfishly devoted to the victory of the social revolution but the government is authoritarian and the only power determining the rhythm and the ultimate aim of the revolution. The masses cannot interfere. Therein lies the danger. Restriction of freedom engenders dissatisfaction, and the masses become disinterested. It is said that the Cuban Revolution is devoid of any ideology.<sup>35</sup> Cuban workers and peasant want social reforms which promise a better life and more freedom; these are the tenets set by socialist movements of the entire world. The internationalization of revolution propagated by the Communists however, appears questionable to me.

I do not feel qualified enough to give advice to the Cuban



comrades but want to remind you of the slogan of the First International: "The liberation of the workers can only be the job of the workers themselves." This has still not lost its meaning. The progress of the new order depends mainly on the deployment of the initiative of the masses and the revolutionary spirit of the working people. Centralistic tendencies and dictatorial power seizure by leaders are a danger to the newly acquired liberties, and lead to the decay of the revolutionary achievements. The surest way to success is the direct action of the people. To these short remarks I join my warmest wishes. May the Cuban Revolution achieve a maximum of freedom and humanitarianism!

The comrades agreed with me wholeheartedly and added to my published speech the following quotation of the words from Don Quixote to Sancho Panza:

The liberty, Sancho, is one of the most valuable gifts of heaven, no treasures of the earth and seas can be compared to it, One has to risk one's life for liberty and honor. Bondage is the greatest evil that can befall human beings.

To get first hand information of revolutionary changes, especially agrarian reforms, I traveled across the country in all directions and after my return to Havana I published my impressions under the title *Studies of Agrarian Collectives in Mexico, Israel, Spain and Cuba*. By comparison I found that the Israeli kibbutzim and the Spanish colectividades have gone very far towards achieving social justice. The Mexican agrarian reform however, is limited to the distribution of land and grants of low interest loans to poor peasants, whereas the Cuban cooperatives are organized on the pattern of the Russian kholkozes.<sup>36</sup> Since the initiative came from the state and membership was compulsory the peasants joined only halfheartedly. Fidel Castro did not succeed in bringing a solution of the social problems to the countryside. I also stated in my pamphlet that a definitive judgment on the Cuban reforms is not possible after so short a time.

A few months later I published in Buenos Aires an eyewitness report about the revolution, including the agrarian reform and an evaluation of all aspects of the revolution in Cuba.

### The Syndicalists Break with Castro

The libertarian syndicalists of Cuba came out in June 1960 with a manifesto stating their point of view of the revolution



and requesting abolition of government control of the economy and its reorganization on a libertarian socialist basis. Furthermore: "The unions are the competent organs of the working class as regards the economic reorganization of society. Only they can bring the socialist postulate into reality. Submission of the unions to the state is tantamount to treason against the revolution." The syndicalists condemned introduction of compulsory military service under Castro, which had never existed in Cuba before and added: "Nationalism and Militarism are the equivalents of Nazism and Fascism; what we actually need are teachers and not soldiers, ploughs and not cannon, bread and butter for the people and not arms. We request the build up of society from below to above, from the simple to the composite. We did not fight the Batista dictatorship to be replaced by another dictatorship. As long as we, the people as individuals are not free there can be no free society."

Publication of this manifesto was followed by the break of the libertarian movement with the new dictator. Castro responded with the persecution of libertarian socialists, syndicalists and anarchists and suppression of the libertarian press. The revolutionary freedom fighters had only the choice between prison, workcamps in Cuba or exile. The best known militants chose the last.

I was also a target. Shortly after I left the country I was told that police had come to arrest me. Why? Because of my lectures? My writings? They did not say, but it was certainly for political reasons. I was for a liberating revolution and not for dictatorship. A few months later I wrote an article for the *Frankfurter Rundschau* about my experiences during the Cuban Revolution.

The libertarians continued the struggle for a free Cuba from exile. I was constantly in touch with their representatives and kept informed about events. I was entrusted, together with comrade R.J. Alvarez, Secretary of the Movimiento Libertario Cubano in Miami, to represent this organization as a delegate at the Second International Congress of Anarchists in Paris in 1971. Their position regarding social revolution agreed with mine.

The most important tenets were: It is essential to refrain from repeating the mistake of generalizations that have noth-



ing to do with reality. We have to energetically oppose every totalitarian government which disregards the rights of men. We have to make a distinction between totalitarian governments and those which uphold human freedom and admit anarchist organizations as legal. We have to fight for a system that assures technical progress to all. This can only be achieved by production and consumer collectives and through libertarian unionization. We hold the period of heroic revolutions as a matter of the past and renounce the idea of imposing revolution for the realization of anarchy. On the other hand we support all movements which advocate more freedom and social justice and are against enslavement of men and people by totalitarianism. Our militants should be active in all worker, peasant and student organizations and in all ethnic groups and defend freedom and justice at all times.

I heartily approved of these maxims, accepted the mandate and went to Paris. Alvarez, secretary of the *Movimiento Libertario*, came from Miami and the two of us represented the Cuban libertarians. The hope that the International Congress of Anarchists would agree with the principles of the Cuban libertarians came to naught. Among the participants were the followers of Che Guevara who booed the declaration we read.<sup>37</sup> Even before the congress started a few of the anarcho-fanatics living in exile had strongly protested my participation because I had committed the unforgivable counter-revolutionary sin of not having contacted them a year earlier when I went on an information trip to Spain on behalf of the Swedish syndicalists. After two days of heated discussions Alvarez and I submitted the following declaration:

The Libertarian Movement of Cuba (MLC), rooted in the traditional struggle for freedom and standing in the front line of the battle against Batista, attended the Second International Congress of Anarchists with the intent of explaining the tragedy of the Cuban Revolution which has deteriorated into a Stalin-type dictatorship. In consideration of the fact that the position of our movement presented in writing and our ideological and tactical concepts were rejected, we deem our further presence and participation in the work of the congress useless.

We left the congress and our position was approved by the *Movimiento Libertario Cubano in Exilio*. The congress in Paris ended three days later without any significant results.



This was certainly not a time of glory in the history of international anarchism. The Communists saw their chance in Castro. Cuba developed into a totalitarian state of the Russian kind. Up to this day nothing there has changed.



*Chapter 15*  
**1950-1951:  
In Europe Again**

I boarded a liner in November 1950 in New York bound for Europe which I had to leave eight years before. The passport and visa regulations there were still very strict five years after the end of World War II. Traveling from France to Germany I was ordered off the train on the Belgian border and sent back because I did not have a transit visa. I had a similar experience at the German border town of Mittenwald, where I, a native of Germany, was refused admittance because the visa in my Mexican passport had expired. With melancholic longing I remembered the good old days before World War I when—except for Russia, Turkey and the colonies—no passport nor travel permits were necessary.

Between December 1950 and May 1951 I lectured in fifty-eight cities and towns of Sweden about Aztec and Mayan culture as well as the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917 and its effects on the present times. At the turn of 1950/51 I was in Lapland, near the northern polar circle. Here the mercury fell to 35 degrees Centigrade below zero. A few months previous I had been in the southern part of Mexico where the temperature was a very hot 35 degrees Centigrade above zero. It is surprising that the human organism can stand a temperature difference of 70 degrees without any ill effects, especially at my age.

After my long stay in Latin America I saw Europe with different eyes and I could not help but make comparisons



between Sweden and Mexico. Thirty-five years have gone by since I came to Sweden for the first time. During that time many things had changed. Considerable progress had been made, socially and politically. It seemed clear to me that Sweden's peaceful way to democratization and (attempted) economic equality can be seen only in context with its geographic position, historic development and ethnic homogeneity. A philosophic interpretation of history notwithstanding, whether idealistic or materialistic, which saw in the ups and downs of development of peoples and cultures the realization of abstract principles seems to me absurd.

Where native or foreign conquerors hold peoples settled for hundreds of years in abject bondage, a mentality of master and subjects develops, hard to overcome and continuing long after liberation. Such it was in Mexico.

In Sweden, never invaded by foreign powers due to its insular position, historic and ethnic factors were instrumental in developing a sense of equalitarian congruity never before found in any other country in equal strength. (It should also be considered that in Chile, where similar conditions prevail, development was not always peaceful.) During my five-month stay in Sweden I once saw in a newspaper a report of a study group consisting of employers and employees where discussions centered around the topic of equality in Swedish democracy. One employer's representative even proposed to abolish the "you" in conversation with employees and replace it with the more familiar "thou." Anarchist C. J. Borklund told me that some time before my arrival a member of the royal family was present at an anarchist meeting in Stockholm to discuss with other participants questions of a literary nature. Where sons of kings discuss cultural and intellectual problems with anarchists, assassination attempts on crowned heads of state are unthinkable. The Swedish labor movement came out strongly for equality of income, a request which, theoretically at least, could not be ignored by the ruling Social Democratic Party. This request must, under the present circumstances, be unfulfilled. Nevertheless there were cases when this postulate was put into effect. According to a report in the syndicalist paper *Arbetaren*, three important city officials in Helsingborg, a city in southern Sweden, voluntarily declined to accept a salary increase in the amount of



13,000 Kroner (about 9,000 Marks) because they considered their present salary quite adequate. Things like that cannot happen in Mexico. Implementation of reforms in an entire country with regard to equalization presupposes certain limitations of freedom which could be considered (especially in times of computerization) as intrusion into the individual privacy of citizens. State supported health care for the newborn is generally approved, however taxes for maintenance of bureaucratic machinery are generally rejected.

I mentioned in my lectures that in Mexico there is no law requiring residents to be registered with the police and that medicaments can be bought in pharmacies of South America freely and without prescription. This statement evoked great surprise. Nevertheless, the assertion of the British publisher Roland Humfort that Sweden is a neototalitarian state seems to me to be greatly exaggerated.<sup>38</sup> It is also a semantic error to call Sweden a socialist country as is frequently done in the U.S., for private enterprise still exists there. Consumer cooperatives, communal and government production collectives, as well as social and old age welfare are in effect in all countries of the capitalist world. Sweden has a mixed economy. There are also giant capitalist enterprises, some under foreign ownership, so that, according to communist nomenclature, one can speak of an imperialist country, which is of course equally without justification. Even Sweden cannot boast of having an ideal form of society (where is such to be found?), yet the Swedish plural economy with its political freedom and humanitarian institutions is preferable to any totalitarian government, whether on private or state capitalist foundations.

### **Last International Congress of Syndicalism**

During World War II Sweden was the only country permitting syndicalist organizations to be openly active. The Central Organization of Swedish Labor (SAC) with a membership of 25,000 published two dailies, *Arbetaren* in Stockholm and *Nortlandsfolket* in Kiruna. It was therefore in its best interest to transfer the bureau of the Syndicalist International Workers Association (IWA) to Stockholm at the onset of the war. Only several years after the end of the war was it possible to hold a new syndicalist meeting. From May 11 to May



22, 1951 an International Congress of the IWA took place in Toulouse, in southern France. On its agenda was a reassessment of the movement and coordination of international actions. I participated as a delegate of the Federation of Libertarian Socialists of Germany, successor of the Free Labor Union of German Anarchosyndicalists (FAUD). After World War II there was no revolutionary situation.

In Germany and Italy, after the overthrow of Hitler and Mussolini, an attempt was made to restore political democracy. This was actually achieved with the support of Social Democrats and a few social reforms. In the eastern part of Europe occupied by the Russian army only parties and organizations were permitted which were ready to accept a totalitarian government after the Russian pattern. In Spain, Franco set up a dictatorship, destroying all democratic institutions, including parties and unions. This action of the reactionary groups dealt a deadly blow to the Syndicalist Federation of Labor (CNT). In spite of formal suppression, the members of the federation kept in close touch, continued the struggle underground and got support from their exiled comrades in France.

It was the exiled organization of the Spanish anarchosyndicalists which organized the congress in Toulouse. And there, near the Spanish border, the exiled Spaniards established headquarters. The congress took place in a building where, during World War II, Spanish anarchosyndicalists directed the resistance against the Germans. The political climate was not favorable for syndicalism. Reports were submitted indicating a loss of influence of the syndicalist movement. In the French organization Spanish anarchosyndicalists were far more numerous than French party members. The Italian Unione Sindicale had only a few locals. In England, the Netherlands and West Germany there existed only centers of propaganda but no syndicalist unions, and in Portugal, the Federation of Syndicalist Unions fell victim to Salazar's dictatorship. In the U.S. the IWW had completely lost its impetus. In Argentina Peronism liquidated the once powerful FORA. However, in Cuba anarchosyndicalists stood at the helm of several industrial unions.

Not unexpectedly the congress dealt with Spanish problems. The underlying reason was the participation of the CNT



in the Republican government during the civil war. This problem had been discussed in 1938 at an International Congress of Syndicalists in Paris. It was then decided that every affiliated section should have the right to make their own decisions so far as tactics were concerned. This right was still on the books when, after the war, a new Spanish Government in Exile under the leadership of the Left Republican Giral was formed which coopted two candidates of the illegal syndicalist organization in Spain. This set off a heated controversy between those who remained in Spain and the anarchosyndicalists who fled to France. The latter were in principle against any participation in governments; the former were for it in the hope that a democratic government in exile might isolate the Franco regime and hasten its downfall. These questions were also on the agenda of the International Congress in Toulouse. Each of the two groups expected to win their point at the international forum. The congress, however, came out against participation. Another discussion centered around the methods the syndicalists wanted to effectuate a just social and economic order. I declared that our goal cannot be achieved by a single revolution. Social theories can only find justification in practice. The social revolutionary experiments of the twentieth century are more pervasive than the socialist ideologies of the nineteenth century. Today we know that a uniform economic order decreed by a revolutionary government does not bring emancipation of the oppressed classes or peoples. The objectives of libertarian socialism—general welfare, social and individual freedom, respect for the dignity of men—cannot be achieved by force and authoritarian programming, because a human being is not an inert mass and the social order not an unalterable pyramid. Social happiness cannot be ordered by captains from their command posts but has to be forged daily by expert teams of socially engaged people. Models of social behavior cannot be prescribed by international labor organizations; they can only exchange experiences and plan a mode of libertarian cooperation. These were the fundamental principles which I acquired after forty years of experiences as a perennial student of revolution in the old world as well as the new continent. In 1922 I was one of those who helped organize the International Workers Association. In 1951 I was



present at its last meeting. Later on the International Bureau of the syndicalists was moved from Toulouse to Stockholm where it still leads a precarious existence. Other internationals went the same way. Even the Comintern, founded by Moscow, left the political stage when revolutionary Russia turned into a conservative reactionary state. Like human beings, institutions grow old too. But this should not lead to pessimism. Other generations arise and continue under new conditions and in other forms the struggle for freedom.

### Colony d'Aymare—Collectivist Freedom

A visit to the Colony d'Aymare, 150 kilometers to the north of Toulouse, gave us an opportunity to compare the theories discussed at the congress with a libertarian collectivist experiment. We passed the small town of Cahors, on the river Lot on a bridge originating from the time of the Romans, as its inhabitants proudly boast. At the entrance of the town there is a sign which reads: "Cahors Ville du Monde." Asking why such a small town purports to be a metropolis, I was reminded of a young American who, not long ago, stood on one bank of the river Seine in Paris, tore up his passport and said: "I am a citizen of the world." This was the incentive to elevate Cahors (birthplace of Leon Gambetta<sup>39</sup> who, during the siege of Paris in 1871, left the city in a balloon to proclaim the French Republic) to the first city of the future world republic of a universal federation of free cities. It recalled to me also the vision of the great federalist of the last century, P. J. Proudhon. We arrived in d'Aymare Département Lot around noontime. The colony was a large estate of about 120 acres, bought by Spanish anarchosyndicalists for the newly-founded International Antifascist Solidarity (SIA). There were dwellings, farm buildings, an old age home and vacation place for the veterans of the civil war. A libertarian radio transmitter was installed for broadcasting in Spanish; however, it was soon dismantled after Madrid intervened. Political refugees from Spain, among them many construction workers, built apartments for residents and vacation guests. The good-sized rooms, equipped with central heating and warm water, were very comfortable. Bathing facilities for men and women were also available. Wheat was grown, as well as potatoes and



vegetables for home consumption and tobacco for sale. Under trees of sweet chestnuts, pigs were grazing, as well as cows and about 100 sheep. There were 250 chickens and innumerable rabbits (in this part of the country roast rabbit was on the menu at least once a week). Meals were served in a special communal dining room, laundry and clothing were allotted according to need and vacation money was disbursed from a common treasury just like in a happy family. Vacationers from outside gladly and voluntarily lent a helping hand in agricultural work. No written by-laws were needed. Every six months a chairman, treasurer and secretary were elected. It was an economic and cultural commune based on voluntarism after the pattern of the Spanish *collectividades* during the civil war and much like the *kibbutzim* in Israel which I planned to visit at a later date. I was certainly not surprised to meet there old friends whom I had known during the civil war in Spain.

"Our way of life," one told me in a Levantine mode of expression, "corresponds to the concepts we harbored when we were young, of a free commune. We live without exploiters and exploited, without rulers and subjects, in a harmony of men and nature." The French peasants in the neighborhood at first regarded the foreign colonists with suspicion but soon changed their attitude. Already after a short time friendly and neighborly relations were established. I could close the notes in my diary with the blunt sentence: Overall impression of the free collective of d'Aymare: positive.

### **Among Italian Anarchists**

Italian friends invited me to lecture in Italy. I started my trip early in September 1951 and earned traveling money by writing reports for newspapers. Room and board were provided by my comrades. Italian anarchists did not have a good reputation in foreign countries. In the course of a century there had been two or three assassination attempts committed by men who called themselves anarchists. This was enough to defame all anarchists. The anarchists I met in Italy were all harmless and very peace loving. My three-and-a-half weeks of lectures were given mostly in big cities but also in small towns. By invitation of my comrade, the librarian Hugo Fideli (alias Trene) in Ivrea, I gave a lecture in the plant



library of the world renowned office machinery producer Olivetti about "Mexico, the Country of Color and Arts." In another lecture I discussed the Mexican Revolution. Executives, all members of the upper classes, were sitting next to laborers. Common cultural interests had displaced all class differences to the subconscious on that evening.

Adrian Olivetti, majority shareholder and Secretary General of the enterprise which he inherited from his father, was a man who had a wide political horizon. He had published a book, *Democracy Without Political Parties*, and exhibited federalistic ideas. According to his opinion, human society in the industrial age should be built upon economic enterprise and autonomous communes. He was the founder of the "Comunità" movement and elected to parliament as its delegate. Here his political ambitions ended. As a social reformer, he never attained the importance of his great predecessor, the English textile manufacturer Robert Owen. Adriano Olivetti was a modern entrepreneur with a philanthropic penchant, similar to Robert Bosch<sup>40</sup> in Stuttgart, Germany. Olivetti built modern apartments for his workers and the kindergarten in Ivrea had modern equipment comparing favorably to the private kindergartens in the United States.

In Carrara, the marble city, a traditional center of the anarchist movement, my comrades showed me proudly the "anarchist bridge," built by anarchist initiative. During World War II Carrara was occupied by German troops towards the end of the war. When the Germans left they blew the bridge up. Construction of a new bridge was indefinitely delayed by the authorities. Weary of red tape, the anarchists took the initiative. "Tomorrow morning we are going to start construction on a new bridge; volunteer help is welcome." This was the slogan. The volunteers came in droves and they gave money and building materials. The authorities could not stand aloof. Red tape was overcome, profit motivation put aside and in a short time the bridge was ready for use. The anarchist motto was: "Solidarity and devotion to the common weal," in short, citizens' initiative. There are many instances of this kind in other parts of the world. Is it ignorance or is it intent that the press never took notice of it? After lecturing in Rome I visited Ignazio Silone, whose intellectual honesty I greatly respected.



In 1929 a cofounder of the Communist Party of Italy, he did not hesitate to defect when, under Stalin's dictatorship, socialist ideals turned into demagogic lies. In 1930 he left the party. Silone belonged to those Communist defectors who turned their back on the god in whom they believed when they became convinced that he was not a god. Although he was one of the most important Italian writers, during the Fascist era his works were published only in Switzerland in the German language. Silone's rejection of the capitalist system and totalitarianism, his ethical concept of socialism and federalism were common ground between us. We talked about the internationally well known Swiss doctor and social theoretician, Fritz Brupbacher who—Bakunin in his heart and Marx in his head—definitely broke with state socialism and espoused the libertarian kind of socialism. I told Silone of the tragic death of Camillo Berneri in 1937 in Barcelona and he in turn gave me political and social insight into the situation in Italy. His intelligent eyes and the Mediterranean clarity of his formulations as well as his clever judgments made a deep impression on me.

In Rome I stayed with Pia Zanolli Misefari, the widow of Bruno Misefari, persecuted into death by fascism. Pia at that time was busy writing her memoirs, published under the title *L'Anarchico de Calabria* (The Anarchist of Calabria). She described the hard life of a loving couple devoted to an ideal under fascist dictatorship. The book became a best seller and she was awarded the prize of literature by the Italian government. The author, grown old, still holds high the ideals of her youth and her hopes for the emergence of a peaceful libertarian society free of any force.

In Naples I had a reunion with Giovanna Berneri, the widow of Camillo. I had not seen her since the funeral of Camillo Berneri. Now she was editor of the monthly *Volontà*, carrying on the spiritual heritage of Camillo. Furthermore, in memory of one of her two daughters, Marie-Louise Berneri—who had been active in the anarchist movement in England, but had died in childbirth—she established, with the help of voluntary contributions from comrades, a home for poor children in a suburb of Naples which she also managed. Thus, she practiced mutual aid in the spirit of Kropotkin. She told me that in the thirties a daughter of Bakunin was still living in Naples,



—information which might be of some value for Bakunin biographers.

A few years later Giovanna Berneri died. The intellectual Berneris—father, mother and daughters—merit a place of honor among the many pioneers fighting for freedom and social justice.

The lectures about the Mexican Revolution I gave in Italy were afterwards criticized by the ultras in the anarchist press with regard to the still existing shortcomings and social inequalities in Mexico. The difference between me and my critics is the autonomy of the concept of value, possibilities and limitations of revolutions. According to my knowledge of history and my practical experience no revolution can eliminate social evils for all time. The great French Revolution abolished feudalism and the monarchy but could not prevent the emergence of the exploitive system of private capitalism. The Russian Revolution overthrew czarism but new rulers created a dictatorship of a state capitalist hierarchy and a police state which robbed the people of its freedom. Social inequalities still exist. The Mexican Revolution brought an end to a thirty-year dictatorship and military rule. This was unique in America but it formed the basis and the prerequisite for a just land distribution and progressive social legislation. It could not, however, prevent the beneficiaries of the revolution from corrupting its ideas. It is up to the succeeding generations to correct shortcomings by a steady people's initiative, even if this does not help to initiate another revolution. Such it was in the past and indications are it will not change in the future.



## Chapter 16

### Israel: New Horizons in the Land of the Kibbutz

#### Visiting Martin Buber

On October 4, 1951 I boarded a ship bound for Israel. A few hours after my arrival in Haifa a bus took me to Tel Aviv. When, on our way, we passed a Christian cemetery with its crosses, my thoughts—in space and time—went back to Germany where, under the Nazi regime, Jewish graves were desecrated. The objective of my trip was to visit collectives known under the name of kibbutzim and to compare them with the Spanish collectividades of the civil war. Shortly before I ventured in this trip I read Martin Buber's book, *Paths in Utopia* (Heidelberg, 1950) and decided to visit the author who, like myself, was an admirer of Gustav Landauer. He resided in Jerusalem. The revivalist of Hassidism<sup>41</sup> saw the best solution of the Jewish-Palestinian problem in a binational state of both ethnic groups. But he and others of the same hue were a small minority in the Zionist movement. The majority wanted a pure Jewish state as it was proclaimed in 1948. In our conversation about collective settlements Buber explained to me the differences between Kwuza, Kibbutz, Moshav Shitufi and Moshav Ovdim. He knew nothing of the Spanish collectividades of the civil war.

#### Kwuza Keriat Anavim

An hour and a half away from Jerusalem—half an hour by bus and a one-hour hike—is the Kwuza Keriat Anavim, sur-



rounded by hills and pine forests. I did not walk on the same path but under the same sun that, according to the New Testament, Jesus wandered with his apostles. The librarian in the Department of State who spoke to me in English, on the telephone in Hebrew, and with his colleague in German, gave me the advice (when I told him that I was German) to contact his friend the Berliner Rosenstein, who had lived in Keri'at Anavim for fifteen years and was an expert kibbutznik. I met the right person.

Dr. Rosenstein explained that his Kwuza was founded in 1920 by immigrants from the Ukraine. They went through untold hardships; the work was excruciating. Every shovel full of soil, every blade of grass was won with sweat. It was necessary to open holes in the rocky ground and to fill them with soil; only then was it possible to plant trees. It took many years before orchards and vineyards grew out of the fallow land. Later, cattle breeding and chicken raising complemented the agricultural venture.

We also built a hotel for vacationers which, due to the favorable climate here, became a popular resort. We are altogether 400 persons, 140 active *Chaverim* (comrades); the others old and retired people. The land is not private property but belongs to all the members of the Kwuza. Work and consumption are regulated according to socialist principles. "From everybody according to his abilities, to everybody according to his needs." The individual has no personal income in money but we have what we need. We eat in a common dining room; cloth, tobacco and cosmetics—important to female members—are distributed as needed. Money for vacation and travel is disbursed out of the common treasury. Married couples live in their own bungalows, singles in apartments. Children up to age 2 are taken care of in nurseries by well-trained nursing personnel but kept in steady contact with their parents. For those age 2 to 6 and 6 to 14 we have special homes. Good education is held to be of paramount importance. Every youth coming of age has the right to choose between remaining or leaving the colony. In case of sickness members are entitled to free medical care. A board of directors is elected every year. According to unanimous consent vacations will be accorded to every member, maximum fourteen days yearly. At least once a week a movie is shown in the big meeting hall and from time to time theater and orchestra ensembles from Jerusalem or Tel Aviv perform for us. All of the members alternate in kitchen duties, myself included. If I give dental care to persons not belonging to the colony the honorarium is paid to the common treasury. This



is in general terms the economic and social set-up of our Kwuza. The same rules apply also to all Kwuzot and Kibbutzim.

### **In the Religious Kibbutz Jawne**

Are there also religious kibbutzim? Why not? Religion—semantic covenant and inner urge for union and spiritual reunion with men and the universe—does not preclude community of property. Both are related concepts and can be placed under the same denominator. The pre-Christian Jewish sect of Essenes lived in such a community. And that the first Christian communities had their Jewish predecessors is well known in church history. For me, a religious kibbutz was by no means a surprise but I was astonished that its members were emigrants from Germany and not, as I assumed, Jews from the Orient.

A group of about 500 immigrants came from Germany to Palestine. They were allotted 500 acres of land by the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kajemet). They were all from bourgeois families and founded a collective based on religious principles. I was greatly surprised to find in this settlement congenial comrades. Chaver Buchaster, born in Hanover, told me that he and his comrades were inspired by the socialism of Gustav Landauer. Landauer's "Appeal to Socialism" (1911) was published by Histadrut (Israeli Federation of Unions) in Hebrew.

Our collective is a success. If anyone of us had worked only his own piece of land we would have gotten nowhere. A collective calls for a bigger output than the farmwork of the same number of people in separate units. As a collective we could organize our work more rationally. We grow wheat, have orchards and a substantial number of cattle. We export 1.25 million eggs yearly. Besides we have a sandstone and limestone quarry. Our settlement is a Kibbutz. A kwuza is only an agricultural entity but a kibbutz is agricultural and industrial. In their inner structure kwuza and kibbutz are equal. Of the 490 members of our settlement, 220 are active in the production process, 180 are children, among them 50 refugee children of parents who do not live in the kibbutz. All children are under our educational care. We do not feel that the fact that we cannot enrich ourself is a disadvantage at all. We have security and safety and consider ourselves members of a great family. One example: As a nonsmoker I forego my ration of tobacco but I do not feel entitled to request more chocolate than a smoker.



I was invited to a party in the bungalow of the Adler family, who came from Hamburg, Germany. Mrs. Adler's sister married in Haifa the brother of Erich Muehsam who was murdered by the Nazis. The conversation centered around child-parent relationships in the kibbutz. The evening before I visited with the Buchasters the children's dormitory. Mrs. Buchaster undressed her child, tucked it in and the Buchasters left with a good night kiss. It is said that sleeping in a dormitory is, for small children, inimical to the intimacy and belonging in a parent-child relationship. "What do you think of children reared in a kibbutz?" I asked.

"The children of kibbutz families do not develop any inferiority complexes," replied Mrs. Adler. Marital and parental love are not less intense in a kibbutz than in the cities. Proof: city families send their children to kibbutzim for education. While we were discussing this topic the two sons of the Adlers entered—both in their twenties—and heard our last words. One of them, a tall and strong fellow, embraced his mother and said to me: "The kibbutz is our community and this is our beloved mother. Had there been a kibbutz opponent present, this scene certainly would have changed his mind."

### Schawe Zion—First Moschaw Shitufi

Forty Jewish families from Wuerttemberg escaped from persecution by the Nazis and came to Palestine in 1938. The Jewish National Fund allotted them fifty acres of land in northern Galilee, not far from Akko. They were neither socialists nor religious idealists and were indifferent to the libertarian-communist social experiment of the kwuza. The partition of land into small, individually-owned parcels seemed to them—ignorant as they were of agricultural economy—very risky. They solved their problem by common tilling, the products to be sold collectively and the proceeds in money distributed in equal parts to all members. This was to me a new form of village collective which I planned to visit next.

Schawe Zion is situated in upper Galilee, one hour by bus from Haifa. On the seat opposite me in the bus were two women who spoke a foreign language that sounded somewhat familiar to me. I found out soon that it was "Sephardic," a



dialect related to Spanish as Yiddish is to German. The "Sephardim" in the Middle Ages, imbued with Arabic science and the Greek philosophies, were expelled from Spain in 1492 and many of them settled in the Balkan countries. After the creation of the Jewish state several groups of them returned to the land of their forefathers. The two women complained that they were still not given any apartments and had to dwell in tents. "We were forgotten by rich uncle Rothschild,"<sup>42</sup> they said to me ironically, laughing when they left the bus.

Outwardly there was no difference between Schawe Zion and other settlements; only the central administration building and the common dining room were not there. The secretary of the village collective readily gave me all the information I wanted. He too, like all secretaries of settlements, started out with enumerating production results and emphasizing the success of the experiment. There were never any disagreements among the comrades with respect to division of labor and organization. The working time was set by unanimous consent to ten hours in summer and nine hours in winter. These long hours are justified by the fact that everybody is employer and employee at the same time and longer work hours mean more income. Wages are equal for men and women. Household help for sick members is paid at the same rate as any other work. The collective also has a store where its own products are sold at cost. For all other merchandise a small charge is added for administrative expenses.

In an address commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Moschaw it is said, among other things:

What distinguishes Schawe Zion? Fertile soil, excellent irrigation, moderate climate, its location on the shores of the sea, and forty minutes from Haifa! In ten years of arduous work an exemplary settlement has been built where not long ago sand dunes, weeds and thorns were present. Today our vegetables, well-known for their excellent quality, are offered for sale in Haifa. Our cattle breeding is among the best in the country. Tractors, ploughs, harvesting machinery, mechanized workshops, carpentry and locksmith, etc. serve the buildup and maintenance of our enterprise. All buildings have been constructed in the last years by our members. Schawe Zion has asphalt-concrete roads, gardens and a kindergarten, an elementary and agricultural school and a synagogue. Our Moschaw Shitufi links the advantages of rational management of a big enterprise with the comfort of a private family life.



Everybody has his own place, every woman does her cooking on her own stove, every child eats together with the parents and sleeps under the same roof with mother and father. Our settlement has become a model for new ones. It is our intention to accept thirty-five more families who, we hope, will help to continue our work, bettering and beautifying it.

### Collective Village Nahal

From afar I saw on the plain of Galilee, a cluster of a few hundred white cottages amid greenery and shrubbery with plenty of multicolored flowers. It was the Moschaw Ovdim, the collective village Nahal. There are no mansions nor slums, which proves that no rich landowners nor poor day laborers live here. This settlement of a thousand members is in every respect the most modern village I ever saw. Along broad boulevards are gardens in front of tidy one-family homes bounded by stables and orchards from which arable land stretches in wedge shapes outward. In Nahal resides my friend and comrade Nathan Chofzi. We write articles for the same paper. Chofzi came in 1909 with a group of immigrants from eastern Europe to Palestine, then a Turkish province. "In the beginning we had to make a living for ourselves and our families by construction work or any other work we could find," he told me. Chofzi, the freedom fighter, was loved by his friends and admired for his exemplary life as a "Jewish Tolstoy." It was he who, with a group of socialists and pacifists, founded Moschaw Nahal. Nathan Chofzi explained to me the particular structure of the Moschaw.

A village community, it combines individual with collective work. It was the first village of its kind in Palestine and soon became a model for others. At the time of the creation of the state of Israel there were, all in all, eighty villages of the type of Moschaw Ovdim in a country comprising some 20,000 inhabitants. When I expressed my admiration at the practical and at the same time esthetic set-up of the settlement, Chofzi replied that this was not always so. The surroundings were swampy and malaria infested. There was no capital available for melioration work and home building. It took years of the most arduous labor to overcome these difficulties. Every member is allotted as much land as he and his family are able to work, with a maximum of ten acres. There



are no land owners employing paid help. If a settler is incapacitated by sickness the village community pays for a substitute. Road construction, construction of water reservoirs, and building of collective stores, all within the village, is performed by unpaid and voluntary work of all members. Purchase and sale of merchandise is also collective business. Private deals cannot be made. All settlers belong to the union whose members are automatically insured against sickness. Nathan Chofzi had ten acres at the outset, now he owns only two. As a strict vegetarian, he keeps no cattle and does not drink animal milk but uses instead milk made from almonds. At an evening party we came to speak of property relations. There is no private property land in the Moschaw. All settlement land is leased to immigrants by the Jewish National Fund for the duration of 49 years (the seven times seven years of the Old Testament). After expiration, the lease will be renewed. The rent is set at 2 percent of the value of the land. The same conditions are applied to kwuzas and kibbutzim. Lifestyle and natural milieu are the same as in the kwuza. I asked why they chose the moschaw when conditions were alike in kwuzas and kibbutzim? The answer was: "We prefer our private households to a giant household with a common dining room. We also want our children to sleep in our home. In a kibbutz not all individual propensities can be considered. In a moschaw we feel unfettered. This is, after all, perhaps a matter of taste."

### In Galilee

A group of young immigrants inspired by A. D. Gordon<sup>43</sup> established in 1910 the first kibbutz and called it Degania. The philanthropist Baron Rothschild who gave the money for the purchase of the land was in a rage when told that the young pioneers agreed on a socialist structure of the settlement. For the rich banker, socialism was equivalent with nihilism; he loathed both. Those who predicted failure of the experiment proved to be poor prophets. The success, however, was such that later another kibbutz was founded under the name of Degania B. Degania A and Degania B have since that time been known as the first kibbutzim in Jewry.

Degania A, the kibbutz I visited, operates a plywood factory besides agriculture and cattle breeding. After the death



of Gordon, his admirers established Gordania Natural Science Institute and a Museum of Natural History, including a collection of plants and minerals of the region. Foreign students spend their vacations in Degania and help bring in the harvest. In the dining hall I sat opposite a young Chilean girl who, shortly after creation of the state of Israel, came with her Zionist parents to the promised land. Glad to have an opportunity to talk in her native Spanish, she told me that she preferred the bourgeois milieu of the country of her birth to the lifestyle of the kibbutz to which she had a hard time adjusting.

Continuing our trip, we came to the lower Galilee depression, twenty meters below sea level. Driving along the shore of Lake Genezareth, we—the practicing physician Dr. Jaroslawsky from Eastern Prussia and I—could not resist the temptation to take a dip on the spot where, as my friend jokingly put it, Jesus and his disciples met the penitent Mary Magdalene. Soon afterwards we arrived in Tiberias with its historic monuments. There is also the burial place of Rabbi Akiba, who allegedly said that there is nothing new under the sun, everything has been here before.

On my second trip through Galilee we came to the cities of Nazareth and Canaan, which are still permeated with religious traditions. The lemonade seller, faithful to the Koran, closes shop on Friday; the Jewish grocer spends Saturday in God-fearing rest and the Christian barber does not do any haircutting on Sunday. In the orthodox church of Canaan a bearded priest showed me a pitcher in which (or so he claimed) Jesus, attending a wedding, changed water into wine, according to the holy scripture. In the Roman Catholic church, a French monk showed another clay pitcher in which the miraculous changeover also took place. This reminded me of the medieval theological dispute of whether the angels are male or female. The Muslim innkeeper, however, who was well aware of the pitcher dispute, made fun of the “imposters.” In Canaan—that is in Muslim Canaan—only the words of the prophet Mohammed matter, namely, “wine drinking is prohibited.”

### Israel—Eleven Years Later

Eleven years later, in 1962, I came again to Israel, this time



by way of Istanbul, Ankara and Damascus. In a small hotel in the old city of Jerusalem (at that time part of the state of Jordan) I slept in a common dormitory with eight Palestinians, two of them Christians and the others Muslim. The next morning when we looked down from the flat roof of the hotel to the new city of Jerusalem, my dormitory companions said to me: "This is the land which the Israelis robbed us of and which we shall take back one day." They asked me to get them work in Germany, which unfortunately was out of my power. In our conversation about the two unfriendly neighbors I tried to comfort them with an allusion to history. For centuries I told them, Europeans were fighting each other until they were ready for peaceful coexistence after all. If people could learn from history they would find a way out of the Arab-Israeli conflict. If they would renounce state borders and establish free federations and communities, they could live in peace next to and with each other. Jews and Arabs have one common ancestor, Abraham. Patriotism and love for one's country should not be related to nationalism and xenophobia. My companions looked at me quizzically. I was seventy and they were twenty and thirty years old.

My trip to the Mandelbaum Gate took only three minutes but it took twenty-four hours before I had a chance to pass through it. When finally I got my passport properly stamped with the necessary visas, there arose another obstacle: between the Jordanian and Israeli customs is a no-man's land. Neither Jordanian nor Israeli taxis were permitted there to wait for customers. I do not know how long I would have had to wait had not a Swedish adventurer on his trip back from India given me a lift in his car.

The objective of my second trip to Israel was to study the new phase of development of the community settlements about which contradictory reports were published abroad. By coincidence I was invited to watch Sabbath activities in Kibbutz Mefalsin (founded by Argentine Jews). In the flower bedecked dining hall Chaveroth and Chaverim in festive dress were assembled. A lovely girl read a passage from Tenach (the Old Testament) and a children's choir sang a Hebrew hymn to a melody of Schubert. A solemn greeting of peace—Shalom, Shalom—closed the ceremony.

My inquiry took several weeks. Although the social structure



was the same as eleven years before, I found some changes. New kibbutzim emerged and the old ones underwent many innovations. The Kibbutz Javne had changed to such an extent that I could hardly recognize it. Farm buildings and shops had been placed outside of the settlement so that the air of the living quarters should remain pure. In the center was a luxurious dining hall, an administration building, schools, a clubhouse and a Synagogue. The streets were paved and the cottages were built in the style of a vacation resort, equipped with refrigerators and showers with hot water. The library was enlarged. Every evening a discussion group met, theater and movie performances were offered and there was also a sport arena and a swimming pool. When families gathered for afternoon tea or coffee on the lawn in front of their homes they presented the semblance of one very large family living together in harmony. The social prosperity was based on economic factors. When I visited Israel the first time the country had to import cotton. Now, due to the initiative of the collectives, cotton sufficient for home consumption is produced. In 1951 avocados were unknown in Israel. In 1962 Kwuza J. alone planted twenty acres of land with this fruit which the Aztecs called ahuate. Brought to California by Americans and from there to Israel, it accounts for a considerable revenue. Also sisal planting, heretofore unknown, is now a very profitable business. These are only a few of many examples. Although collectives made great strides, Israel has not become a country of kibbutzim. In a population of over two million, only 90,000 live in commune settlements and only 5,000 of them are active. Of the arable land, 80 percent is now, as before, privately owned; however the remaining 20 percent did provide and still provides 33 percent of the total of agricultural and cattle products. The inhabitants of kibbutzim, only 3.4 percent of the total population, account for 8 percent of the Gross National Product. The Israeli collectives—kwuza, kibbutz and moschaw—have proved to be far superior, with regard to rationalization and efficiency, to the private sector of their own country and for that matter also to the compulsory collectivized enterprises in the countries ruled by Communists. The Russian kolkhozes and sowkhozes, after nearly half a century of existence, are not able to produce sufficient food for the population and the state is



forced to lease to the kolkhoz peasants small portions of land for private use, and permit the sale of the products on the free market in order to ease a tight supply situation.

It is by no means different in Fidel Castro's Cuba, where small landholders owning only 30 percent of the land contribute 40 percent of the agricultural products of the country. How can it be explained that the Israeli settlements, in spite of their spectacular success, comprise only one-fifth of the total work force in agriculture, whereas four-fifths prefer private property? There is a plausible answer to this question. The collectives are undertakings of Zionist and socialist engaged immigrants who came from eastern Europe to Palestine at the beginning of this century. Also German Jews who came as immigrants from Hitler's Germany were permeated with socialist ideas. After the creation of the state of Israel however, the number of socialistic-oriented immigrants was minimal. If it is correct to say that there is no socialism without socialists, it is equally correct to say that there are no kibbutzim without kibbutzniks. Although there are still new collective settlements being established by idealistic immigrants, their number is far exceeded by those who prefer the private sector of the economy. The kibbutz is not a compulsory kolkhoz. It is rooted in a common feeling of people who voluntarily unite to make among themselves social justice a reality. Absence of compulsion guarantees economic success and moral strength. Voluntarism on the other hand entails numerical limitations.

### **Wage Labor—End of the Kibbutz?**

Even during my first stay in Israel the question arose whether wage labor from outside the kibbutz is consistent with socialist principles. Due to expansion of production it became necessary to hire wage labor. For fruit harvesting the kibbutz could rely on help from students of the cities who came to spend their vacations in the countryside. Also students from abroad come every year and lend a helping hand, not asking for any monetary compensation. Temporarily employed paid help are no problem for ideological disputes. More serious however is the situation with permanently employed paid help in the kibbutz. Of approximately 230 kibbutzim, more than 100 operated industrial enterprises



(today there are 146). Half of the labor employed were wage earners.

At Kivat Bonner, the biggest kibbutz, there is talk about disagreement between management and labor, nevertheless, in spite of this, economic and social equality remains. Managers also must take their turns serving meals in the dining hall and washing dishes in the kitchen. Not all workers in kibbutz-owned industrial plants want to be members. Half of the workers of the armature plant of Kibbutz Dorot, founded by German Jewish immigrants, are not members. The wage laborers are mostly immigrants from Morocco. Two of them to whom I spoke during my visit told me of their disinterest in membership. "The kibbutz pays good wages, the working conditions are also good, so why should we become members? We prefer our independence." One Sephardic Jewish woman quizzically looking at the Ashkenazim (Jews of German extraction) said to me: "Ils nous appellent les noirs" (they call us blacks), however, she added that she is much better off than in her country. She and her family have their own home, live in comfort and are well paid.

Paid labor in collective settlements was the topic of heated discussions. The kibbutz theoretician Meir Mendel summed up his opinion in one short sentence: "Either the kibbutz abolishes paid labor or paid labor will abolish the kibbutz." My opinion was less dogmatic. I pointed out the collectivization in Spain during the civil war and told them of my experience in the collectividades of Mancha, where peasants cooked for all members in the mansions abandoned by the landlords, the same way as the kwuza members in Israel. However, in most Spanish collectives, above all in Aragon, the peasants continued their private family life and distributed food to every family. The amount of family wages was set in meetings and paid in the form of an advance, regardless of profession and performance, pending preparation of the yearly accounts. Industrial enterprises regulated the distribution of the proceeds in the same manner. The Spanish anachosyndicalists were intent on abolishing unjustified capital profit by a just distribution of the proceeds of their work. In some villages local paper money was printed. The roots of social injustice are not wages per se but the exploitation of labor by capital. If all employees of a kibbutz plant—regardless



of whether they are members or not—receive an equal share of the proceeds, then social injustice in this collective enterprise is abolished. And this is essential. I presented this theory also during a lecture about Spanish collectives during the civil war which I gave in Tel Aviv.

As a consequence of progressive mechanization, structural changes were regarded by all kibbutz pioneers as a loss of the social content of communal life. Regional large canning plants and tractor stations, big slaughterhouses and laundries supplanted the small village workshops. By the same token, small village schools were displaced by modern schools for ever larger districts. In these innovations the old kibbutzniks saw a demotion of their communes, a dissolution of local democracy for which they now were longing nostalgically. A kibbutz periodical wrote: "If even in a small kibbutz commune differences arise between management and labor in a certain branch of the economy, how then could problems of economic and social democracy in a large regional kibbutz community be solved? The human being has a soul after all and a great part of humanity is guided by its feelings. What place can these feelings have in a large economic entity? This was the attitude of the old pioneer generation who could not get used to changed conditions. I told my friends: "Technical progress that lightens the burden of work cannot be a hindrance on the way to equal welfare and equal freedom for all." At my first visit to Israel, kwuza, kibbutz and moschaw were islands of social equality. In 1962 nothing has fundamentally changed. I left the country convinced that the collective settlements will in the future remain prototypes of social justice in spite of technical progress and production-related structural changes.



## *Chapter 17*

### **1951, 1961, 1971: Yugoslavian Revisionist Communism**

#### **First Impressions**

When, two years after his rupture with Stalin, Tito declared that he would establish authentic communism according to the precepts of Karl Marx, I decided to get a glimpse of this new experiment. Coming from Israel, where, in 1951 I had an opportunity to get first hand information about free socialist collectives, I was well prepared for this study trip. Also my knowledge of the Spanish colectividades during the civil war enabled me to make comparisons and to draw conclusions. Finally, of great benefit to me was my experience in post-revolutionary Russia in 1920. The direct inquiry into structural innovations of revolutionary countries and their practical application became my special field of endeavor.

I was not satisfied with only one trip to Yugoslavia. As I visited Israel again eleven years after my first trip in order to ascertain the progress of collective settlements, I went to Yugoslavia three times at intervals of ten years to get acquainted with the actual political and economic changes. I want to summarize my impressions topically and not in chronological sequence. I was sitting in the railroad station of Ljubljana next to a married couple. He was a cabinetmaker and she a cleaning woman, sweeping streets. This is not very heavy work but the situation is more serious when women in construction work carry heavy bricks on their shoulders, something I saw in many Slavic countries years ago. It was on



a Saturday evening. The couple waited for a train to a nearby village where they hoped to get a week's food supply from relatives. To my question as to whether, six years after the end of the war, there is still a scarcity of food they answered: "No scarcity but some shortages and above all high prices. Those who have lots of money can buy everything on the free market. In the government run stores everything is already sold out at nine o'clock in the morning. In the privately owned stores prices are much too high for our low income." When they hurried to the arriving train I had just enough time to reply: "This is just as it is in capitalist countries." Later on I sat next to a woman philologist in a self-service restaurant. She told me that she had just sold her silk dress and was now ready to sell her china sets. One kilogram (2 lbs.) of coffee cost the equivalent of twenty working days' wages. She has relatives in the U.S. and expects to be able to emigrate. An unemployed accountant asked me to help him get a job in the Federal Republic of Germany. When I asked a streetcar conductor, a factory worker, a waitress if they were better off under Communist rule than they were under capitalism they merely shrugged their shoulders. A watchmaker who fixed my watch told me that he has to give an accounting to the National Trade Commission for his income and expenses although he does not employ any help and he gets the wages set for his kind of work. The same rules apply to barbers. Everybody complained about bureaucracy. The wages in government enterprises have not been raised. These were my first impressions.

### Agriculture

The seat of the Agricultural Cooperative Administration (Glavni Zadrusni Savez) is located in Zagreb on a square significantly called "Death to Fascism." Private estates and church land have been expropriated, I was told, and converted into government-owned properties. On several occasions some small parcels of this land have been distributed to landless agricultural workers. About 70 percent of all arable land is privately owned by small and medium peasants. The maximum size of privately owned land plots is 25 acres. Joining of small peasantry with the cooperative (called *zadruga*) is voluntary. Here most of the peasants keep part of the land



(never less than one acre) for their private use. Everyone has his own fowl, pigs and at least one cow. At the time of my visit there were 16,500 zadrugas or production cooperatives. The duties of cooperative administrations were the securing of credits, legal and professional counseling and the elaboration of guidelines for purchase and sale. Compulsory collectivization à la Stalin never existed in Yugoslavia. In the government-owned estates the legal and social position of the workers were equivalent to industrial workers at the lowest level. To illustrate I present two examples:

Thirty-seven peasant families established a zadruga in the village Sevetzi Kraljevic, one hour by train from Zagreb. They contributed altogether 130,000 acres of land and all the necessary agricultural equipment, plus twelve horses and fifty-five cows. Every *drug* (comrade) held for his own use one acre of land, draft animals and fat stock. The tilling of his own land was more intensive than that of the common land and accordingly the care for their own cattle was better than that of the cooperatively owned. They still could not afford a tractor and the plows were hitched to a horse or to a pair of oxen. The products were sold at set prices to government owned stores. Every zadruga member received 100 Dinar daily wage and a share of the profits after the close of the harvest year. The peasant sells the products of his own land for higher prices on the free market. The village has 500 inhabitants but only half of them belong to the zadruga. There were 1,900 such cooperatives in Croatia operating farms, cattle breeding ranches, vineyards, sawmills, flour mills, fisheries and electricity works. Some of them have features similar to the Spanish colectividades during the civil war.

Economic and social structures were different in Beljenear-Ossijek in eastern Croatia, the former royal domain, now government property. This is a large estate of 22,000 acres of wheat and pasture land, vegetable gardens, orchards and industrial plants processing agricultural products. Wage laborers were employed there the same as they were under the former feudal rule. The wife of the manager showed me their beautiful one-family home and the Volkswagen in a garage adjoining the orchard. She also told me that she and her husband spent vacations in a beautiful place on the shores of the Adriatic Sea. When I afterwards made the round of a meat canning



plant (meat was exported to England) I asked a female worker whether she too spends her vacations on the Adriatic. She gave me a puzzled look and said: "Only higher-ups can afford such luxuries." I was deeply shocked. In this seemingly classless Communist society "higher and lower" classes still remained social categories.

### Workers' Self-Administration, Theory and Practice

Milovan Djilas describes in his book *The Imperfect Society* the origin of the law of self-administration:

The country suffocates in the weeds of bureaucracy and the party leaders themselves grow angry at the seemingly reckless actions of the political apparatus they have established, and upon which rests their power. One day—it was I believe in the Spring of 1950—it dawned upon me that we Yugoslav Communists have a chance to realize the free association of the producers in keeping with Marx's principles. The management of factories should be left to the workers under the condition that they pay taxes as contribution to the military and other expenditures of the state.

When Djilas, after some persuasion, succeeded in winning over Tito to his plan, the party head—according to Djilas—exclaimed: "The factories to the workers? Nobody has achieved this as yet!"<sup>44</sup> Thus self-administration was born. The law, promulgated in June 1950, says: "The socio-economic basis of Yugoslavia is the free alliance of production-related labor and their self-management in production and the distribution of the social product within the labor organization and the socialized community." This somewhat inconclusive wording is complemented by the concrete ordinance that: "To secure expertise in management a director has to be appointed by the government." If the manager is appointed by the government or a subordinate authority, where is the self-administration? I asked myself.

In all the libertarian-socialist economic setups I knew, namely the kibbutzim in Israel and the colectividades in Spain during the civil war, there were no government-appointed managers. Also the constitutional rule often rhetorically mentioned by Tito that "State property is equivalent to peoples' property" stands in stark contrast to libertarian socialism. I wanted to get first hand information on how self-administration works practically.

There was a blackboard at the entrance of the textile mill



Partisanka in Belgrade where names of the best workers with outstanding achievements were displayed as an incentive for others. On the pants of the doorman I could see patches in different colors. My question: "You belong to the personnel of a textile mill; can't you afford a better suit of clothes?" His answer: "A suit of clothes? The price is 25,000 Dinars but my monthly salary is only 3,000 Dinars!" The plant operated on orders and according to a prearranged plan by the official Department of Distribution, which by the way appointed the manager. Working hours were eight hours per day and wages were fixed by the Department of Economics according to the guidelines for this specific branch of production. The crew elects nine shop stewards and an enlarged board of thirty-seven members. Technical and social problems are discussed within the framework stipulated for the entire country in common meetings and decisions are made accordingly. The voucher system has been abolished and wages are now paid in money; they vary between 3,000 and 7,000 Dinars per month.

I was invited to attend a shop meeting of a plant for pharmaceutical products. My seat was decorated with a bunch of red carnations because it was known by grapevine that I once met Lenin in person. I gave the opening address. On the agenda was, among other things, a complaint by the cleaning personnel, whose speaker declared that they remained the only proletarians because their pay was so low that they could not make ends meet. No decision on this complaint was made. The manager of this plant was also appointed by the government.

In the following years self-administration was expanded. In one decree regarding autonomous enterprises the government relinquished its prerogatives to the communities. The banks became independent financial institutions which, with the communities as guarantors, granted investment credits. The constitution of 1963 stipulated in article 6: "Production and all other means of socialized work as well as the entire wealth of nature are nationalized property." What "nationalized property" means is not clearly defined. The plants are definitely not collective property of the crews. Only one thing is clear, namely that it is the prerogative of the communities to establish and manage enterprises of all kinds. The directors



and managers are appointed by the community and not by the crews. Co-determination is limited. According to a new ordinance the shop committee (shop stewards) has a voice in hiring and firing of workers. However, this is a right which is also institutionalized in a capitalist country like the U.S. in the form of the "union shop" system (only union members are hired; non-union workers are required to join after a certain time), and in Mexico it has been adapted to the revolutionary constitution of 1917. Also the tax reduction for autonomous enterprises from 49 percent to 29 percent is not relevant considering that in Spain during the civil war collective plants had to contribute to government expense only 12 percent in taxes and this on a voluntary basis. The Yugoslav Communism is distinguished from the Russian by the fact that in Yugoslavia central administration is abolished. However the true administrators are not the workers but the technocrats and the directors. The Macedonian Communist leader declared in a party meeting held in Skopje that "Self administration results in aristocratization." The technical staff directs, determines and manages. The workers have no right to veto set wages, let alone self-determination. According to the newspaper *Politika*, Belgrade, May 7, 1962, Tito said in a speech in Split: "There are cases where top wages are twenty times as high as the basic wage and earners of lower wages in profit sharing have to be satisfied with 3,000 Dinars while managers get 80,000 Dinars."

New exchange rates of the Dinar have resulted in some fluctuations but in 1971 when I last visited Yugoslavia, the pay of a chambermaid was 600 Dinars a month and of a waiter 900 Dinar, but the hotel manager's pay was 3,000 Dinars. The wage differences are the same as in western (capitalist) countries. Low wages have consequently engendered strikes just as in capitalist countries. Were laborers also managers, strikes would have been unthinkable; nobody strikes against himself. The workers in fact struck against their superiors. At the seventh praesidium conference of the Communist Party it was reported that 2,000 strikes had taken place in the last twelve years of the self-administrative system. The proposal that work interruptions (the word "strike" was cautiously avoided) should be regulated by law was rejected. Two months later, however, at a congress of



self-administrated enterprises it was decided to recognize the right to strike. The legal conditions of settlements are similar to those in capitalist countries. A strike is justified if the representatives of the crew on the one hand and management or community on the other fail to come to terms in wage negotiations.

Difficulties of another order came from the lack of capital for self-administration enterprises. During my stay in Belgrade I read in *Borba*, the central organ of the Yugoslav Communist Party, that every third enterprise is in financial trouble. Twenty-eight percent of disbursements for wages are financed through short term credits for which up to 30 percent interest has to be paid. These usurious interest rates are levied (in a Communist country) by self-administered banks. The party theorists are, of course, violently opposed to these practices, yet powerless to eliminate them. The *Communist*, Belgrade, wrote: "The banks have developed into powerful financial institutions which absorb a considerable part of the surplus value and this threatens to raise them into a position of power above society." The surplus value and its counterpart, exploitation, could not, according to admissions of authorities in ideology, be abolished at the present time. The beneficiaries are the aristocratic office holders. Introduction of self-administration has also had other unforeseen consequences. Many of the so-called "political enterprises" established for political reasons under the centralist management were forced out of business, because they were unprofitable. In Croatia alone 200 plants were closed. The number of employed persons fell from 1.65 to 1.25 million. Hence unemployment rose correspondingly. Against this tendency there was no other way out but to open the borders for emigration of workers into capitalist countries. Eight hundred thousand job seekers left and found remunerative work abroad, but there were still 74,000 unemployed in 1973. The overall economic plan made provisions to integrate youth coming out of school into the production process. However the government was powerless to cope with the unemployment problem. To enhance economic growth, private enterprises were given favored status under the law. Family enterprises had the right to employ as many as five family members, plus five additional hired helpers. According to the illustrated *Vus*,



a poll in Croatia revealed that 52 percent of those polled were in favor of private commerce. This trend is even stronger in Yugoslavia's northwestern province, Slovenia. In the February issue of the Communist periodical *Theoria in Praktika* (Ljubljana) chancellor Stane Kavcic wrote with astounding candor: "It seems to me that by now we have overcome the sectarian and romantic socialist ideology and are out of the idealistic spectrum. We are going to integrate privately hired labor into our economy because we must increase our common accumulation. Experience in other socialist countries so far has shown that it is unprofitable in socialism to nationalize all branches of production."

These reflections are the result of a twenty-five year development which started out with the abolition of private enterprise and the establishment of government-directed economy, then collectivization and ending in the introduction of a limited private and mixed economy.

### **Ideological-political Monopoly of the Party**

During my trip through Yugoslavia I failed to detect any political freedom in a democratic sense. The Communist Federation is still the only political party permitted. Djilas was imprisoned because of his criticism of the ruling clique. Mihail Mihailov was locked up because he wanted to establish a social democratic party. Words like Centralism or Statism are frowned upon and there are periodic frictions between hegemony-minded Belgrade and other republics, especially Croatia, which consider themselves to be nations in their own right and with their own codified laws. Requests for academic freedom by students are completely ignored. Professor Branco Prbicevic, secretary to the Communist University Committee, wrote in December 1969: "The Federation of Communists has never maintained that liberty and equality should be open to all political trends. Herein lies the essential difference between revolutionary organizations and the petit bourgeois interpretation of freedom and democracy. Pluralism, that is, political groupings with tendencies contrary to those officially prevailing, cannot be permitted to co-exist with the Federation of Communists. This should be stated openly and clearly to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

No mistake: this is a clear claim for hegemony of a dogmatic



clan. In another poll taken in Croatia, 70 percent of those polled declared they had no share whatsoever in the political power structure. In 1973 the rigidity of federalism was somewhat mitigated out of fear that even the few freedoms still existing could undermine the federal power. The Slovenian writer Zarco Petan was by no means wrong when he wrote in his book *Forbidden Slogans*: "Socialism is a paradise for capitalistic tourists." In the marketplace I saw in a bookstore works of De Gaulle and Russian classics displayed but neither books by Solzhenitzin nor Amalrik. I got into a conversation there with a young Croat who works in the German Federal Republic and spends his vacations in his sunny homeland on the Adriatic Sea. He told me that he earns abroad three times as much as he could in his own country. Here, anyone, to make ends meet, has to work two jobs, the main job in the morning and a side job in the afternoon. This means a working day of twelve hours and making only half as much as in Germany. He told the truth. Not far from my hotel a Yugoslav married couple was building a one-family home with money saved and earned in Germany.



*Chapter 18*  
1957-1958:  
In Central and South America

**A Trip into the Unknown**

The Spanish word *Inquietudes* seems to express what prompted me to undertake, at the age of 59, a trip, so to speak, into the unknown without any predetermined object and time limit. I had studied peoples and their social conditions in about half the world, survived two world wars, participated in civil wars and revolutions, knew prisons and concentration camps from within; what could I still expect? I lived in Mexico, a beautiful country with a people of old cultural traditions and among personal friends. I was not looking for adventures. What was it then that drove me again into the unknown and made me forego an early quiet retirement? Inquietude! That inner urge for which the Hispaniolologist Julio de la Carnat knows not less than fifty synonyms. You are a "Peregrino de lo ideal" (a pilgrim into things that do not exist) said my friend Enrique Rangel, when I took leave of him to embark on a trip to Central and South America. He alluded to the wandering Greek philosopher Peregrino Proteus who, in the year 165, let himself be publicly burned to death to prove his fearlessness. My ambitions, however, did not go that far. I just wanted to enlarge my knowledge of other Latin American countries.

In November 1957 I started out by railway from the Mexican border town of Tapachula for Guatemala, the capital of the state of the same name. The chairman of the Federation



of Unions, whom I knew from a convention in Mexico, called a meeting of functionaries to whom I gave a lecture on the importance of unions for social progress. In a second lecture I explained on request the role of the workers in the German economic recovery miracle called the "Wirtschaftswunder" after World War II. At the banana plantation Tinguisate where I was taken by a union official I found the workers' dwellings very primitive and monotonous. However, they had electricity, running water and sanitary installations and showers, all comforts which the Indios in the neighboring Mexican jungle did not have. Foreign capital and the pugnacious spirit of the native workers brought civilization and progress to the tropics.

In El Salvador there were relatively few military uprisings but the country was ruled by the army and progress moved along at a snail's pace. The ruling clique made much ado about the fact that they, with the help of Quakers from abroad, had established collective villages, which I visited. On top of the village entrance was a sign in big letters reading "Christo Rey." Since "King Christ" died two thousand years ago and his vicars on earth, the priests, did not bring the reign of heaven down to earth, they simply rule over his faithful. It is only regrettable that these people need help from abroad to awaken the spirit of cooperation.

Nicaragua, the country of the great lyrical poet Ruben Dario and of the first guerrillero of this century, Sandino, murdered in 1933, is also the country of reevaluation of political values and words respectively. The party of dictator Somoza calls itself "liberal." The conservative youth movement fought for political freedom, the unions are nationalized—that is they are ruled by the state. Here I could not give a speech against dictatorship. The president of the university who had read my essay about Kierkegaard<sup>41</sup> in the Mexican paper *Novedades*, asked me to lecture about the Danish existentialist philosopher. (Although no expert in philosophy I had read Kierkegaard's books in the Danish original.) I gave the same lecture a few months later in Quito, capital of Ecuador.

In Alajuela, Costa Rica I was a guest of Boris Pisa, a Russian anarchist who left Russia after the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt and settled in Costa Rica. He told me of an experience he had during a trip to Europe from which he



had returned only recently. In France he bought Voline's *La Revolution Inconnue*, the well-known book about the Russian Revolution. The controlling customs officer at the French-Swiss border saw the book and exclaimed with visible surprise: "You read this book?" "What is so surprising about that?" he asked. The officer answered: "The author of this book was my father." "And my friend," replied Boris.

Costa Rica is the Latin American mother country of the Catholic Union movement. Archbishop Sanabria suggested and Padre Benjamin Nuñez founded a layman's "Rerum Novarum" Union during World War II.<sup>45</sup> The fighting priest said: "The unions strive next to achieve better living conditions, the realization of all moral and ethical norms inherent in all religions. The most important thing for us is the person and the dignity of man. We are neither communists nor socialists but, if I may say so, 'Personalists.'" The unions inspired by Padre Nuñez, due to their fighting spirit, supplanted all Communist workers' organizations. The Rerum Novarum movement took the lead in Costa Rica and soon spread also to other Latin American countries. My conversation with Padre Nuñez did not center around the salvation of the soul after death but around the material and cultural betterment of the disadvantaged social groups of this world. Later I had an opportunity during visits to banana plantations to gain first-hand knowledge of the devotion and high moral standards of these ideologically independent union organizations.

Unfortunately I could not afford an airplane trip from Costa Rica to Colombia and Venezuela. I did not ask to be paid for my lectures to unions and the honorarium for lectures at universities and for reports to different newspapers was barely enough to cover room and board. Travel by train and bus was time-consuming and also otherwise not very convenient but had the advantage of getting me into contact with the little men, workers and peasants who readily told me of their problems and wants.

### In the Lands of the Andes

In Caracas, Venezuela I was welcomed by Ludovico Strauss. Twenty-two years before I had helped secure his release from prison in Barcelona. I also saw Professor Juan Campa, former secretary to the Teachers' Union in Barcelona, who also came



to Venezuela as a political refugee. He was director of a private classical high school in Caracas which he named Instituto Einstein. Fortunately there was still a vacant place in the dormitory which he generously offered to me. Thus, I could stay longer in Caracas and study the economic and social situation in Venezuela and also give lectures.

I lack all the characteristics of a diplomat and never wanted to master Talleyrand's art of hiding my thoughts behind words. I rather belong to that type of whom it is sarcastically said in Spanish: he spends his life saying what he really thinks and then he is surprised that he never has any success at all. When during the discussion of a certain point I said to the dean of the University of Caracas that I was not of his opinion but esteemed him as a person, he replied laughingly: "A quote from church father Augustine." "And also Voltaire," I said, "expressed the same thought in other words." We understood each other. My frankness this time met an understanding partner.

For ten months I traveled through the lands of the Andes: Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. I could add to my knowledge and also do some work lecturing and writing. After a lecture in Cuzco, former seat of the Inca kings, I could not resist making an excursion into archaeology. I wanted to see Machu Picchu, the lost city of the Incas, excavated at the beginning of this century and situated only a few hours railway trip from Cuzco. I did not regret this side trip. Machu Picchu unites the grandiose features of the Egyptian pyramids, which it surpasses, with the loveliness of the hanging gardens of Babylon, to be one of the eight wonders of the world.

In October I came to Santiago de Chile. There my friend André Germain, French conscientious objector from World War I, whom I had as a house guest in Berlin, offered me hospitality in his home. A persistent war resister, he left France during World War II and went to Chile where he found peace. He also felt this kind of "inquietude" with which I was afflicted. He managed the Chilean section of the Congress for Freedom and Culture, an organization established after World War II to stand up for freedom and culture threatened by dictatorial and authoritarian government. Germain arranged a press conference for me to which he invited journalists from



the capital of Chile. The Communist paper *El Siglo* subsequently published a terse communiqué on October 6, 1958. All it said was "The anarchist Souchy came to Chile. Of course he came on orders of the Yankees." That's all they had to say. I ignored the diatribe completely. Soon after my arrival in Santiago I had another surprise. I had a reunion with Professor F. Nicolai whom I had met twenty years before in Rosario, Argentina. He had been a resident of Chile for several years and taught at the university. André Germain was his friend and his frequent guest (Nicolai was single). Charlotte, André's companion from Paris, invited both of us to an excellent dinner (French cuisine) which she prepared, much to our delight. Later I visited Nicolai in his own apartment. He was eighty years old now, retired but still active writing. The small pension he received did not cover his living expenses and left him almost destitute. When I visited Nicolai again in 1964 during my third visit to South America—Germain meanwhile had died of cancer—he was worse off than before. On my return to Europe I wrote a letter to the then mayor of Berlin, Willy Brandt, asking him to give financial help to Nicolai who after all was a native son of this city. Some time later the office of the president informed me that an order was given to the German embassy in Chile to remit a sum of 350 Marks as a one-time allowance, further financial aid being taken under consideration. However, it was too late; the ninety-year-old fighter for peace had died. My friend Eugen Relgis, living in Montevideo, wrote his biography, which was published in Buenos Aires under the title *Georg Nicolai, un sabio y un hombre del porvenir* (Georg Nicolai, a Scholar and a Man of the Future).

Now back to 1958. I came to Cordoba, the Argentine university town, just on the fortieth anniversary of the student revolts that led to the university reforms. Progress achieved by revolution has to be constantly defended to prevent it from falling victim to bureaucratization. Lack of freedom leads to new dissatisfactions, new problems and struggles. These thoughts were expressed in a flyer distributed by students which started with the motto: "Not everybody has the courage to tell the rulers that we harbor different ideas than theirs," I discussed this topic with the manager of the university radio station, the son of an old political friend of mine.



When I told him of the situation in other Latin American universities he asked me to air my experiences in quarter-hour broadcast from the university radio station. We elaborated a program for seven days. The short speeches should have a nonpolitical character, from Indian expressions in the Spanish language of different countries to regional customs and habits. The final broadcast should include general philosophical observations and puns. The broadcast series was well received. The entire year of 1958 was spent with lectures, social information trips to Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and another side trip to Bolivia.

I had a strange encounter in the province of Buenos Aires. After a lecture on the Israeli kibbutzim which I gave in a settlement established at the beginning of this century by Jewish immigrants, a woman said to me that I strongly resembled the brother of her girlfriend from the Silesian town of Heinan, whence she came. Indeed I had relatives in Heinan. The woman told me that there were no Nazis in the family of my uncle and one of my cousins was imprisoned by the Nazis for his political beliefs. This hitherto unknown information reached me by a circuitous route, almost a quarter of a century after the fall of the Nazi rule, in the Argentine pampas.

### Rise and Fall of Argentine Anarchism

The political vein in Argentina had changed a great deal since my last visit. Then, in 1929, the labor movement was under the influence of the anarchists. *La Protesta*, an anarchist daily, was published for twenty years. Many intellectuals embraced libertarian ideas. Labor struggles frequently led to violent encounters with the police, as in other countries, but without bloodshed. Simon Radowsky's assassination attempt on the chief of police Falcón, who was responsible for the shooting of eight working men who staged a peaceful May demonstration in 1908, was the only exception. Radowsky prepared his attempt all alone and was also alone responsible. There was no anarchist conspiracy. Thirty years later only a shadow remained of the once glamorous movement of Argentine anarchism. Anarchist organizations were dissolved. The Peronist unions were the extended arm of the state. *La Protesta* appeared only as a monthly. The remaining nucleus of the anarchist movement changed its name into "Libertarian



Association." Its theoretical mouthpiece appears once a month under the name *Reconstruir*. In Buenos Aires and other big cities of the country the libertarian groups continued however to propagate their ideas, founded libraries, and held membership drives in the universities. However, they in no way influenced the social development of the country. The fall of the anarchist movement in Argentina reminds us of every biological phenomenon. Organizations come and go, yet the ideas continue to live. Important is the spirit of revolt, liberty and progress. And this spirit is not dead in Argentina. This was my impression, gathered during my second trip. My friend Diego Abad de Santillan had similar thoughts. I met him in Berlin during the twenties and worked with him during the Spanish Civil War, in Barcelona. He lives now in Buenos Aires and has made himself a name as a historian.



## *Chapter 19*

1962:

### **As an Education Expert in Madagascar**

#### **Madagascar in an Education Frenzy**

My two years of travel to South America and Cuba were undertaken on my own volition and at my own expense. I preferred to be an expert in one subject instead of being a dilettante in all. The idea to go on a lecture tour to Madagascar was not mine. The International Federation of Free Unions asked me to institute and direct an educational course in Madagascar, no ideological strings attached. I did not hesitate to accept the offer. Although already past seventy I felt fit in body and spirit. With joy and love I prepared myself for this new venture. Madagascar was in an educational frenzy after gaining its independence in 1960. Education there was seen to be the key to secure employment. Often a peasant would sell his only cow and use the proceeds for the education of his son. It was near the port city of Tamatave that I saw a teacher in a hall made of bamboo who taught ninety-three children of different ages while outside illiterate parents were enthusiastic onlookers. Forty-five percent of the population, mostly in the older generations, are illiterate. In 1950, 250,000 children went to school but in 1960 there were already 468,000. Lack of apprenticeship opportunities and lack of jobs for those who were already literate and had left school led to a disturbance of the economic-cultural equilibrium which could only be resolved by an economic upswing and increased industrialization of the country.



**Do the Germans Belong to the Race of Gods?**

The lecture series opened in the presence of the Secretary of Labor and representatives of the unions and business. It drew favorable comments from the public and media as well. Topics of the lectures were chosen with a view to the needs of the country. Participants consisted of union leaders, civil servants, bank and other business employees and managers of agricultural cooperatives. It was an intensive course and the audience was very responsive. I found out that Madagascans were not behind European students of the same educational level. I have preserved their questions, handed to me in writing. Here are a few examples:

1. What exactly is Karl Marx's request for socialization of the means of production?
2. Is there essentially a discrepancy between the socialist ideology of Saint-Simon and that of Fourier?
3. Proudhon, Marx and Bakunin—all three were convinced socialists. What are the elements that distinguish them from each other?
4. The communists also maintain they are socialists; the socialists do not want to be identified with communists. What are the characteristics distinguishing one party from the other?
5. What role do the unions have in communist ruled countries? Is there, in countries with a prevailing state economy, a specific union ideology?
6. Is it possible that unions in capitalist countries will succeed in securing a just share of the social product for workers?
7. When can victory of the industrial revolution be expected in the Third World?
8. Is state capitalism preferable to private capitalism from the point of view of the working people?
9. Is socialization of the means of production in an agricultural country like Madagascar an advantage for the peasantry?
10. Sixty years as a colony has created a kind of spiritual submission. How can we get rid of this state of mind?



11. Could unions be considered to be nuclei of a socialist order, able to replace the private capitalistic system?
12. Do strikes, besides achieving the immediate goal, reinforce the spirit of solidarity?
13. Is it possible that internationalization of the banking system could span the gap between industrial countries and the Third World?
14. What can unions do when increasing mechanization necessitates the layoff of workers?
15. Is it an advantage to the cause of labor if union leaders become city councilors or deputies?
16. In Europe in general and specifically in France most of the unions have ties to socialist ideas; in the U.S. however, they are merely representatives of the workers, interests without being tied to any ideology. Which is better for the working man?
17. Is it advisable to withhold the union fees from the wages?
18. Had the Industrial Workers of the World merely economic or ideological motivations?
19. What, up to this time, has been the contribution of women to the development of mankind?

The German ambassador and the representative of France gave a report about social questions in their respective countries. Then followed questions on the partition of Germany. The next to the last question was: "The Germans are supposed to have a certain technique of lovemaking which is most effective. Can your Excellency tell us more about it?" Then the last one: "Is it true that the Germans belong to the race of Gods?"

For four decades I have heard good and bad things about the Germans in the old as well as in the new country. In Chile, a Chilean of German extraction said to me: "God protect me from storm and wind and from Germans who live abroad." Yet, that the Germans are specialists in lovemaking and belong to the race of Gods, I heard to my amazement for the first time in my life in Madagascar. It has completely slipped my mind what answer the German ambassador gave.

### Race and Classes

Madagascar, at 241,094 square miles is bigger than France.



It had a population of only 5.5 million in 1960 and 6.6 million in 1970, while France has a population of 50 million people. If it were only for the wealth of nature there should not be any poverty in Madagascar. Whoever pledges to work in agriculture could get thirty acres of land free. There is no shortage of land but only of investment goods, infrastructure, modern agricultural equipment and know-how. The island is rich in iron ore and other raw material of all sorts and if this is rationally exploited could secure well-being for all. However, from mere possibilities to reality is a long way full of pitfalls, especially the human factor. Our seminar was a step toward utilization of the human factor.

In Madagascar too, as in other countries of the African continent and in Latin America, class differences coincide with race differences. The dark skinned inhabitants of the coastline are "inferior" to the light brown Howas of Malay-Indonesian origin who gave the country the language and culture. Immigrant Asians control the inland trade. Besides the 50,000 French who form the upper class (from colonial times) there are the 12,000 Indians and 8,000 Chinese who represent the middle class, to which should be added the civil servants, while the aborigines—the vast majority—are peasants and belong to the lower class. "How come?" a barefooted rickshawman of Afro-Asian origin who led me in his hand-drawn rickshaw over the asphalt pavement of the port city of Tamatave, asked me. "The Indians and Chinese prosper in this country, while we, the native remain *pauvre* [poor]?" His daily income did not exceed the value of five kilograms of rice which had to do for him, his wife and his four children. There was rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Meat was beyond his reach. To tell him that "poverty" is derived from "pauvreté" would have been cynical nonsense, since he had a pretty good knowledge of French. I advised him to try and go into some trade. However, I had no answer to his question as to where to get the starting capital.

### Among Lepers

Leprosy, a heritage from the times when bacilli and microbes were still unknown and the importance of hygiene still unrecognized, is still a difficult problem in Madagascar. The number of lepers at the time of my visit was about 25,000



according to figures published by the Ministry of Health. This is, in ratio to the total population, a very high percentage. The sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the hospital for lepers, St. Vincent de Paul, was the occasion for celebrations.

In the sanitarium of Ambatoabo there were eighty-three men, fifty-six women and four children under the care of French doctors and nurses. Modern means of treatment have greatly alleviated the terror of this disease. It can be brought to a point of stagnation but very frequently the afflicted refuse to have the swellings removed by surgery. The medical problems turned into a social one when the convalescents, released from hospital or sanitarium, were not accepted back in their villages. To remedy this situation leper villages were built in the vicinity of leprosariums. The inhabitants of these villages can only do light work because of their weakened condition. They cannot plant rice which has to be handled under water but they can plant potatoes, manioc and pineapples. In one of these leper villages I met a young woman, one of whose hands was mutilated by leprosy, with a healthy child in her arms. According to the French physician-in-chief, infection can be prevented by intake of a sufficient amount of vitamins. Charitable institutions try to make the condition of the afflicted bearable. "Social problems exist also beyond capitalism," said the secretary of one of the relief organizations.

### **Rice Harvest Festivities**

"We Madagascans are not sectarians, not even in religion. We take from abroad whatever we like but cling tenaciously to our faith and to our customs. We submit to baptism and circumcision; we respect the living and honor the dead."

This was said to me by comrade Rasaminana on our way to the festivities of the rice harvest. I would soon experience the truth of what he said. Greeks and Romans venerate their goddesses of fertility, Demeter and Ceres; the Aztecs the god of maize, Centeotl; the Madagascans had a more concrete symbol: a sheaf of rice, the edible rice corn which nourishes them. One does not need an allegoric camouflage and can forego mythologic presentations. Rice planters came from afar with wives and children. In long columns and regional garb they marched through the streets of the capital. On a meadow outside the city, dignitaries and foreign diplomats stood on a platform. The president of the state in a speech condemned the



high price of rice, promised to eliminate the middlemen and also promised to make an end to a situation where the planter gets six francs for a kilogram of rice and the consumer pays twenty-five francs. Symbolic dances ended the festivities. A sheaf of rice is the symbol of the socialists, the strongest party in the country.

### **Cult of the Dead (Ancestor Worship)**

The Madagascan cult of the dead is of Malay-Indonesian origin but is different from Indian and European rites. The corpses of the dead are entombed in the family dead houses. There are no cemeteries in the villages; the mausoleum stands on family property. Members of a family dying far from their hometown are transported hundreds of kilometers to the place of their origin to be entombed next to their relatives. Even the poorest of families build a mausoleum for their deceased next to their bamboo or mud hut. One goes into debt only to erect a magnificent family mausoleum. The home may be very poor but the death house must be beautiful "for death lasts an eternity," one of my friends said. Once a year the walled-up mausoleum is opened to air the skeleton. This custom is observed only in the countryside and not in the cities.

The capital Tananarive had 190,000 inhabitants in 1960 but in 1972 there were already 362,000. In the big cities there is not enough land to build a death house for each family. For sanitary reasons corpses can be transported only during the rainy season. The ancestor cult falls victim to urbanization with increasing industrialization.

The Madagascans are not extreme nationalists. When left wing and right wing extremists asked for the dismantling of the monument to Jeanne d'Arc in the capital (after achieving independence), for them a symbol of imperialism, the black mayor of Tananarive declared that Jeanne d'Arc is a symbol of true and noble patriotism, a model for the Madagascans. The monument was kept untouched. Monsieur Tsiranana, the first president of the sovereign republic of Madagascar was a moderate socialist of francophile hue. He was overthrown in 1972. Under the present president Ratsiraka (since 1975), Madagascar is on its way to becoming an Afro-Asian national Marxist state.



## *Chapter 20*

### **1963: Jamaica and Honduras**

#### **DEVELOPMENT HELPERS "IN PARTIBUS INFIDELIUM"**

##### **New Tasks**

I spent the summer of 1963 in Mexican Cuernavaca. There I received a letter from my French political friend Albert Guigui from Geneva. Guigui started his political career as an anarchosyndicalist. We met in the 1920s. At this time he was director of the Educational Department for the International Office of Labor (ILO) in Geneva, a branch organization of the United Nations. He informed me of a shortage of teachers in the international education organizations and asked whether I would be ready to help out in countries of the Third World. This proposal suited me fine. Nevertheless at first I had some doubts as to whether I should accept the offer or not. Up to this time my pedagogic activities were geared to my political convictions and conscience and I was my own master. Should I now, at the age of 71, become part of a big organization and submit to its precepts? Would such a step involve inner conflicts? Should I be servant of another master? A closer look at the curriculum dispelled my doubts. To begin with, I was supposed to participate in a two-week course in Jamaica. Incidentally, the course was held in the same rooms (meanwhile renovated) where, in 1942 on our way to Mexico, we were held temporarily by British author-



ities. I was given discretion to pick the topics of my lectures according to my own judgment. After completion of my lectures I would leave for a three-month mission in Honduras. There my activities would encompass the organization of lectures and seminars on the history of the labor movement. Furthermore I would, in cooperation with native teachers, elaborate a plan for an institute on labor education. Details and programs were left to my own ideas and initiative. Except for general instructions on cooperation with unions, the Ministry of Labor and the university, I was given no specific recommendations. No political conditions were asked. The offer implied no obligation for a compromise and I did not have to hide my ideological leanings.

### **Honduras with the Blessing of a Junta General**

Honduras is the first among all Central American countries in export of bananas. However, it is last in economic and social development. The legal minimum wages were very low, labor legislation utterly inadequate and social security nonexistent. The educational system was rudimentary. Civil servants did not have the right to organize—hence had no contractually guaranteed salaries, no sickness insurance or old-age pensions. They had to make financial contributions to the party in order to hold their jobs. In comparison to their peers in other countries the status of civil servants was very low. The wife of one of them whom I met had to run a grocery store to make ends meet. However, the workers of foreign fruit companies had a higher living standard than the native employees as a result of their successful labor struggles of the 1950s. Their daily wages were higher, there were schools for their children, free hospitalization for their families, paid vacations and a chance to buy cheaper in the company stores.

During my stay in this country the union of agricultural workers established a construction cooperative which built one-family homes and also recreational facilities on the sea shore. All these things the creole employers did not do. The teamsters threatened to go on strike when the foreign companies planned to turn over the shipping of bananas to a domestic firm. I devoted one month to my new task. In Tegucigalpa, the capital city, I stayed in a hotel called Prado. Its owner, Mr. Seidel from Gleiwitz, was a Silesian compatriot



of mine who had left Germany with his family to escape persecution of Jews by the Nazis.

One night I was awakened by cannon fire. There was a *pronunciamento*, a military revolt. General Lopez Arellano deposed the democratically elected Dr. Ramon Villeda Morales and set himself up in power. A democratic government had invited me to this country and I was now uncertain whether, under a military dictatorship, I could continue my work in full freedom. After some soul searching I decided to ask the new president whether he would give me permission to continue my teaching activities without interference as before. The challenge had its effect. The new dictator/president did not want to lay himself open to ridicule and said: "Como no? (why not?). We also are interested in the education of the people; continue your work." Now I had the green light. With the blessing from above I felt secure against police chicanery. Under the protection of the president I could extend workers' education to people's education in the widest social and political sense. I included in the current series of lectures an evaluation of problems of social progress, political power systems, democracy and dictatorship and so on. Without mentioning Honduras, I proved my points with my experience in fascist Italy, Hitler's Germany and terrorist Argentina. But on the other hand I did not forget to mention the lack of freedom in the Communist ruled countries from Russia to Cuba. My essential contention was that the worst democracy is still preferable to the best dictatorship and that the goal of all people's movements should be, besides securing bread, the struggle for freedom. Of course I was aware that the president of a military dictatorship did not particularly enjoy this kind of enlightenment of the people but the audience at my lectures was impressed.

### Radical Jesuits

In the banana city of La Ceiba the only film projector, which I needed for my audio-visual lectures, was at a Jesuit institution. I was very surprised to find out that the followers of Jesus were more radical than union leaders. (I should not have been surprised for their master, the Nazarene, was himself essentially a radical.) Instead of black they wore a white garb and I found out that they were also otherwise not black



obscurantists. In their library I found two of my books, one about libertarian socialism and one about the new Israel. Pointing to the miserable huts of the suburbs, an order brother with whom I took a walk exclaimed: "Look at that poverty! A revolution is necessary to make an end to this intolerable situation!" This was at the time when the social unrest in Latin America also held a part of the clergy in its grip, and the Brazilian Bishop Halder Camara violently attacked capitalism. The Colombian priest and sociologist Camillo Torres was killed fighting with the guerrilleros.

I visited industrial enterprises in Sao Pedro Sula, the second largest city. The social backwardness was unbelievable. In one of the textile mills children were playing next to their working mothers. I had visions of the Luddites and the weavers of Gerhart Hauptmann. The plant was too small to afford a kindergarten. "Aren't there any day care centers for children in this city of over 10,000?" I asked. "The city councilors have not yet taken note of this situation," was the answer. My farewell from Sao Pedro Sula was very cordial. At the end of my lecture tour a party was given for me with Coca Cola and lemonade. Under general applause a bouquet of flowers was handed to me as a modest token of gratitude for the enlightenment I had brought. We felt a flow of solidarity and friendship.



## *Chapter 21*

### **From the Red to the Black Continent**

#### **Ethiopia**

Another educational mission took me from Honduras to Ethiopia, 15,000 kilometers away. Although situated on the same parallel with similar climatic conditions, there are certain differences between these two Third World countries. The coffee tree originates in the Ethiopian province of Kaffa, but the Latin American countries have surpassed the original province in coffee planting and productivity. In contrast to Latin America the labor movement in Ethiopia is in its infancy. The first union was founded in 1960; the first collective bargaining contract between employers and employees was signed in 1961. In 1962 the first Department of Labor was initiated by the government. Afterwards the Ethiopian Federation of Unions (CELU) was launched. Then followed a slow betterment in the condition of the wage slaves (and that's what they were). In a country with provinces where the population size is estimated according to the consumption of salt and the results of the 1958 census varied between twelve and eighteen million (in 1973 estimates run to about twenty-four million inhabitants), and where, according to an investigation of the unions, over 90 percent of the population were illiterates, the chances for effective educational work among the workers were very slim. I did not expect any striking successes. Nevertheless I achieved more than I had hoped for.

Of 100,000 industrial workers and commercial employees,



30,000 were organized and they were organized as factory unions, not unified in local or professional units. There were no union cadre groups. In my work I had the support of students. The union federation had a small office but no meeting places. Meetings were usually held in workshops or factory courtyards.

In Ethiopia I encountered for the first time language troubles. I understood neither Amharic nor Galla, the two main languages of the country. Only among the unionized teamsters was there a majority who understood either English or Italian. In my lectures I did not deal with complicated social or economic problems but with the elementary questions of finding the best and shortest way towards better living conditions as well as the improvement of labor legislation, the tasks of the unions and the education of its members. I achieved this pioneer work on the whole within one and a half months. A group of monitors and instructors was formed.

### **Organizing with Drums and Trumpets**

My first station was Diredawa, the fourth city in size, where I started a training course of several weeks' duration. The 2,500 employees of the textile industry—of both sexes—were eager to listen to what the white wonderman from a far off country had to say and report. A dry lecture in a foreign language would have been boring and I had to resort to the audio-visual method. A movie about the Ladies Garment Workers Union of New York, featuring episodes of the history of the American labor movement, facilitated my task.

The story began before World War I. Shown were unemployed searching in the trash cans for something to eat, then a picture of the Triangle factory fire in which more than a hundred women lost their lives. Then followed pictures of union meetings and membership drives, followed by economic rises. The unions were successful in introducing sickness insurance and obtained paid vacations for its members. Then we showed snapshots of workers' families in comfortable seaside hotels and on the beach. Furthermore the workers—formerly living in misery—are shown to now have secure positions, comfortable apartments and old-age pensions. The film shows that the joys of life are also within reach for wage



earners. I had to repeat the performance for the workers of the night shift. Interest for the training course increased by leaps and bounds. The union of Ethiopian textile workers was very flexible. In a country where throne and altar had held a tight grip on the people for hundreds of years, the laborers could unite only on the basis of cultural activities. To publish a paper would have been useless because the majority of the members could neither read nor write. Instead, musical instruments were purchased: harmonicas, basses, flutes, drums and trumpets. Factory workers as well as boys and girls were taught to make music without a score. The bandleader followed Euterpe's footsteps in an African manner. Meetings began and closed with music. I once attended a concert of this unacademic band under the open African sky. Rhythm and melody had the same emotional effect on countries of the north. I shared their joy. The union was rightly proud of its cultural achievements.

### Wonja and Shoa

After signing a satisfactory labor contract, the union of the sugar plant workers wanted to raise the cultural level of its members and asked for my advice. After my arrival there I had the choice between a hotel room in the nearby town of Nazreth (not to be confused with the town of Nazareth in Palestine) and a much simpler sleeping place in the workers' village. I decided to take the latter and won the workers' hearts. A Dutch company owned the sugar plantation and the factory belonging to it. I soon found out that the social standard of its workers was far below the status of the workers in banana plantations of Central America owned by North American companies.

The workers' dwellings were primitive. Open ditches on the fringes of the city served as toilets. There were no company stores where they could buy at comparatively low prices as in Latin American countries, where foreign companies (after long strikes) established stores for their workers. The school system for the children of the laborers could in no way be compared to the schooling facilities of the United Fruit Company in Central America or of Oil Creole in Venezuela. We set up a program for evening courses. However, we could not solve the difficult problem of finding competent



teaching personnel. The few lectures I gave during my short stay were insufficient for instructor training.

### **Foreign Aid to a Third World Country**

Bara Dar is a small village near the Nile situated in the midst of cotton plantations. The cotton processing plant built by the Italians was now under the direction of a Yugoslav "development aide." "A recent ordinance," the expert from Zagreb told me, "prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14. But who am I to determine the age without a birth certificate? I send the young applicant for employment to the hospital physician who estimates the age according to the grade of maturity." The hospital, a gift of the Federal Republic of Germany, is run by a German physician. The Soviet Union established in this village a trade school for mechanics and locksmiths. Bara Dar is only one example in Ethiopia of foreign help to underdeveloped countries of the Third World. The Soviet Union built a hospital in Addis Ababa which extends free services only to friends of Communism; other patients had to pay. The U.S. runs, among other things, a model farm where young peasants are given instructions in modern agricultural management. Swedish engineers are teaching and supervising road construction. Israel built a bridge across the Blue Nile; Yugoslavia built a dam. Yet major contributions to the modernization of the country were given by the Italians. After the retreat of the Italian army in 1941 many Italians remained in Ethiopia. They established garages and carpenter shops, opened hotels and stores. Their know-how benefited to a great extent the economic development. Almost all the hotels in which I stayed were Italian owned. It is remarkable that the central square in Addis Ababa is called a "piazza," probably for lack of an equivalent expression in the Amharic language.

I had an extraordinary experience during my activities in Bara Dar. In a nearby village the cotton pickers wanted me to give them a lecture but first of all they wanted to see a movie. Since there was no electricity, a generator had to be brought along. After sunset we assembled in an open field. Black women in white garb squatted on the ground, children in their laps, and waited for the beginning of the movie. My introduction had to be translated into three languages; there



were, besides Amharas, Gallas and also Nilotes. Most of the villagers had never before seen human beings moving and speaking in a gleam of light, yet untouchable and without flesh or blood. Whether the history of the struggle of New York garment workers was the right topic for them is beyond my judgment. A movie about B. Traven's cotton pickers would have been more appropriate. The following day Big Chief invited me for lunch. There was no silverware on the table; a more knowledgeable instructor from abroad took along knife and fork when traveling into the interior. Since I was not a civilization buff I ate with my fingers as all the others did. Before and after the meal the hostess poured water on our hands.

### **Two Out of Two Hundred**

During my stay in Addis Ababa I was invited as a guest to the fourth regional conference of free unions of Africa. On the agenda was the inter-African cooperation of workers' organizations on the socio-political level. On the last day of the conference it was resolved to pay a courtesy visit to the then-emperor, Haile Selassie. Always willing to shake hands with working people but loathe to bow to a crowned head, I refused to go along and was not alone. At the other end of the hall there was another anti-authoritarian—a Swede, who did not go. We understood each other. Two out of two hundred.



## Chapter 22

### 1964-1965: Last Stop—Venezuela

#### Workers' Education

No airplanes are built here, no cars produced, and there is no equipment manufactured; all these items are bought with oil revenue.

In education however, Venezuela is equal to highly developed industrial nations. Only 27 percent of its population is illiterate. Since my last visit six years before many things have changed in this dynamic capital of the wealthiest country in Latin America; the urban and social contrasts however remained. Not only have the number of modern luxury buildings increased, but also the *ranchitos*, the primitive huts of the suburbs. Now, as before, thousands of young people from the countryside come to the capital to pick up small crumbs of its immense wealth and in the hope of striking it rich.

I did not come to Venezuela this time to study the living conditions of its people, but on request of the International Labor Office as an expert with the purpose of setting up a system of labor education. I started my mission in the beginning of November, 1964 and finished by the end of May, 1965. Shortly after my arrival the Fifth Congress of the Venezuelan Federation of Unions opened and I participated as guest. It was a very impressive performance and showed the prestige of organized labor in this country. Attending the opening of the congress were the president of Venezuela, his cabinet members, the commander-in-chief of the army, the



archbishop and the diplomatic corps. Eight hundred delegates represented more than a million organized workers and peasants. The unions were recognized as the authentic representation of the interests of the working people. After the overthrow of military dictator Perez Jimenez in 1959 labor education got a fresh impetus. The Federation of Unions established a Bureau of Education. Schooling courses were organized in all parts of the country and by all the unions. In 1962 there were 10,528 students, 24,500 in 1963 and 57,000 in 1964. Therefore I did not have to prepare new curricula for courses as I had in Madagascar, Honduras and Ethiopia. Here I could work within a well established organization and limit myself to updating already existing plans and creating fresh impulses.

Teachers' salaries and working conditions in most of the schools in this country were regulated by collective bargaining. However public school teachers were excluded (a leftover from the previous dictatorship) and they had no right to organize. A bill permitting public school teachers to organize had recently been submitted to parliament and was expected to pass shortly. I was asked by the Association of Teachers (comprising 30,000 members but without union status) to lecture about the legal position and general conditions of teachers in other countries, and accepted. I described in my lecture the attitude of the white-collar workers towards unionizing. Alluding to the chasm between blue collar and white collar workers in the past century I emphasized as an example the discussion of this problem at the International Congress of the federalistic wing of the First International in Geneva in 1873. Workers' delegations had some misgivings toward the educated intelligentsia and thought workers did not feel equal to them. Yet in the end they were convinced that an intellectual could be as good a revolutionary as a manual worker. Due to a progressive schooling system—I continued—the general educational level is at present much better than before and the social difference between white and blue collar workers is much less than in past decades. The process of economic democratization and social equalization continues. In most European countries and also in Latin America, attendance at government controlled universities is free of any charge. Thus the children of workers



and peasants can easily avail themselves of opportunities for higher education

Class differences are progressively diminishing. The classless society, however, will not come about through revolution but will be achieved only as a result of technical progress and an evolutionary process on the economic, spiritual, cultural and educational level. It is up to the teachers to speed up this process. I pointed out the Free School Movement of Francisco Ferrer in Spain at the beginning of this century; also the democratization of universities in Cordova, Argentina, and talked about the teachers' participation in the Mexican revolution and the present struggles of Mexican teachers for better salaries. I furthermore reported that in France the teachers' union is seen as an important factor of democratic progress and that in the Federal Republic of Germany the union "Education and Science" is affiliated with the General Federation of Unions. In other countries even the civil servants have the right to establish their unions. Without mentioning Venezuela I presented three basic postulates for a democratic teachers' guild:

1. upholding the economic and social interests of its members;
2. participation in the development of modern pedagogic science;
3. inspirational activity for liberty, social justice and peaceful association of all peoples.

"*Acuerdo!*" (agreed) the audience shouted back.

### **Among Oil Well Workers and Iron Ore Miners**

In the oil well district of Venezuela on Lake Maracaibo in the state of Zulia I found that the "petroleros" belonged to the workers' aristocracy: they live in comfortable one-family homes or high-rise apartments. They have schools for their children and hospitals built and maintained by the foreign oil companies. The wages are higher than in other industrial enterprises and in addition the employees get a 10 percent share of the profits, and have many other advantages. Furthermore prices in company-run stores were lower than anywhere else. However, those who did not work for the oil company or those who had lost their jobs had no right to buy in these stores; the company was under no obligation to provide



low-priced food and other merchandise to the entire village population.

There was also, I was told, a kind of cooperative: "Sam" groups of ten to twenty persons chipped in ten to twenty Bolivares weekly or monthly, according to agreement. The total was given by lots to one of its members. To discuss the question of how employees themselves could organize the purchase of food at lower prices I chose as topic for my next lecture "Unions and Cooperatives." To illustrate my point I mentioned the English weavers of Rochdale who founded the Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1844. It was the catalyst of a worldwide movement of cooperatives which today encompasses millions of members. Furthermore, I pointed to Sweden where in the beginning of our century unions and cooperatives worked hand in hand, thus protecting labor from overexploitation as producers and at the same time from excessive prices as consumers. I proposed to the union members that they initiate similar action, which was accepted with warm applause. I do not know, however, if it was followed by action.

It was already carnival time in the city of Maracaibo. The union, according to old custom, chose the most beautiful woman as Carnival Queen. I was invited to be an honorary member of the jury, which was not entirely to my liking.

The second largest resource in Venezuela is the iron ore mines of Orinoco. The mines were exploited by Venezuelan and foreign companies. I gave lectures in the cities of Matanza, Ciudad Bolivar and Puerto Ordaz. The first of May 1965 was a complete surprise to me. The demonstration started with open-air mass, and in a field under the blue sky an altar was installed. After the service the priest in his sermon said that Joseph, the father of the Christ child was a carpenter and that the church at all times had close ties to the working people; therefore the first of May, a day for labor, is also a Christian holiday. Then I took the microphone and talked to the crowd of thousands of people. I told them of the first May Day labor demonstration for the eight-hour day in Chicago in 1886, which ended in bloody clashes and led to the execution of four anarchists. But I also told them of the congress of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1888 in St. Louis where it was resolved to celebrate the



first of May every year as the day of labor. I also reminded the audience of the international congress of socialists in 1889 in Paris which accepted the proposal of the French delegation to adopt the resolution of the American unions and appealed to the workers all over the world to stop work every first of May starting in 1890 and to fight for the eight-hour day and forty-eight hour work week. Without mentioning the well-meaning but ignorant priest I concluded my peroration with the conciliatory statement that the first of May can be celebrated as a day of labor like December 25 is celebrated as a day of peace—by believers and non-believers alike.

### Last Course

The National Institute for Training of Union Leaders in Caracas had set up a three-month course under my direction. Among the thirty-one union leaders, community workers and civil servants participating, ranging in age from twenty to forty years, was only one woman. From my long experience I was well aware of the importance of sympathy and a spirit of friendship for a successful teaching process and therefore I used a trick. At the conclusion of my lecture on the history of labor movements in Latin America, I sang, to the melody of the old song "Glory, Glory, Glory," the American union anthem:

Solidarity forever,  
Solidarity forever,  
Solidarity forever  
For the Union makes us strong.

I wrote the words in Spanish and English on the blackboard and all participants sang along. This is what I wanted to achieve. The inner contact between us was thus established. In the following month at appropriate occasions the singing of this hymn was repeated.

The program had a wide variety of topics. We dealt with economics, social legislation and labor rights in different countries of the old and new continent, agrarian reform, specifically in Latin America, pluralistic and monofarm economic structures, responsibilities in social struggles, methods of labor education, and so on. Of all the discussions and seminars I arranged I found one colloquium especially interesting:



To this discussion on unions, communities and cooperatives I invited the secretary of agricultural labor and peasant unions Ramón Vargas and the Spanish friar Azueta; the latter was sitting on my right and the former on my left side. It turned out that the place on my left should have been given to the priest because he was much more radical than the union leader. We worked intensively together for twelve weeks, taught and learned to gain clarity and truth so the participants could transmit their newly acquired knowledge to others in their home provinces. I was heartily applauded and one of them read to me a farewell poem:

Al Professor Souchy!  
 Deja usted in esto Instituto  
 Un recuerdo deseable  
 Deja tambien sus ideas  
 De un camino responsable  
 Nosotros se depedimos  
 En son de agradecimiento  
 Admiramos su voluntad  
 Y su gran entendimiento.

Translated:  
 You remain to this institution  
 A loving memory.  
 You leave us your ideas  
 In a responsible way.  
 Our farewell to you  
 Is a token of gratitude.  
 We admire your energy  
 And your immense knowledge.



## Chapter 23

1975.

### Portugal—Revolutionary Experiences

#### From the Political to the Social Revolution

When I passed the threshold of the biblical age I had to turn my thoughts to a sedentary life. But where? The world was my home and all human beings my family. In the course of half a century and with passports of four nations in my pocket I was searching for freedom over half of the globe and also preaching liberty. In Berlin as well as Stockholm, in Paris as well as Barcelona, in Mexico, in New York, everywhere that I had friends I felt at home. I could easily have settled in Cuernavaca, the city with the best climate, but this ran against my temperament. Was it fate, fortune or coincidence that brought me to Munich? A Mexican Indio would say "Quien sabe?" (who knows?). Every answer thought to be the right one would call for plenty of other questions. For me the important question was not the "where" but the "what." I wanted to write of my experiences of two decades in Latin America. In 1974 the book was written and published in Frankfurt under the title *Latin America Between Generals, Campesinos and Revolutionaries*. I did not entirely give up my roving life and undertook lecture tours in Austria and Sweden. In 1975 I made a politico-social information trip to Portugal, where the situation seemed to be developing into a social revolution. As a researcher in revolutions I wanted to have a closer look at this phase of development.

Lusitania was the name the Romans gave to the western



part of the Iberian Peninsula that is today Portugal. Here, in April 1974, a dictatorship that had lasted over four decades was overthrown and a revolution took place aiming to establish social justice. This revolution was remarkably devoid of Marxist principles. It was carried out not by proletarians but by military men: generals and officers in command of their respective units. Its winding road, interrupted by sporadic upheavals which led to political democracy, need not be reported here again since the mass media have informed the public sufficiently. The political revolution from above smoothed the way for incisive changes of the socio-economic structure below and corresponded to the postulates of the former anarchosyndicalist labor movement of Portugal. Of this I will report on the basis of my own personal impressions.

The seizure of estates and factories, followed by a change-over of private enterprises into production cooperatives was seen to be the work of Communists. However this was at least partially misleading. The direct action of the Portuguese workers and peasants had nothing to do with state capitalism of the Moscow hue. It was rather the realization of objectives formulated theoretically in the first decade of this century at conferences and congresses of the anarchosyndicalist General Federations of Unions (CGT—Confederacao General de Trabalho).

The expropriation of means of production is deemed necessary. The means of production must be handed over to the producers and managers in care of shop stewards and the products justly distributed.

These are the words of a resolution of the Portuguese CGT in 1919 and a year later the syndicalist Congress of Agricultural Laborers declared, quite in the spirit of Bakunin and Kropotkin, that the entire ownership of land should be in the hands of free communes and the union of agricultural laborers in order to obtain optimal results and just distribution of products. Under the dictatorship of Salazar the syndicalist unions were dissolved, their militants persecuted, imprisoned and often murdered. Many left the country. The syndicalist daily *A Batalha* was outlawed. However, even after the liquidation of the syndicalist organizations the spirit of the movement continued to live and it was this spirit that came to the fore again after decades of oppression. The setting up of cooper-



atives and the occupation of factories reminded me of the collectivization in Spain during the civil war which I had known from my own experience. I did not hesitate to accept the invitation of Swedish syndicalists to be part of a group studying the situation in Portugal. My assumption that the changeover of private enterprises into collectives did not take place under the leadership and the directives of Communists but was the result of the initiative of the working people, proved to be right. Neither in the cities nor the countryside did the workers wait for party orders. The initiative, as in Spain, came from below. In November 1975 we visited big estates and industrial enterprises in order to get acquainted with the consequences of the structural changes within the economy and the social position of labor. Following are my impressions gathered during that trip

### **Praja Grande das Arribas**

While the factories in Lisbon are idle this day, Sunday, November 9, 1975, in a beach hotel nearby—for years now under self-administration rule—there is intense activity. The personnel of this enterprise have achieved their own social revolution in miniature.

The union leader reported:

Our negotiations with the owners dragged on without tangible results for many months. We asked for a paid vacation of a month and a Christmas bonus amounting to a month's salary which was already customary in many other similar enterprises. The management declared that our request was financially unbearable and refused to give in. The intent was to close down and in this case we would have been out of work. Hence we acted with all possible speed. In a meeting of all employees it was resolved to take the hotel under our own management. A managerial committee of five persons was elected. At the outset we worked voluntarily ten and often twelve hours a day. The mass media gave our venture wide publicity. The Department of Tourism accorded us a credit of 100,000 Escudos, and everybody was now conscious of his responsibility. Wages and working conditions were set by a full meeting. The monthly salary of female employees was increased from 3,000 to 5,000 Escudos. Since we are for equality of wages our principle is: equal pay for equal work.

However, due to certain circumstances we were still compelled to maintain certain wage inequalities. The yearly vacations and Christmas bonuses were of course always granted. The loan was repaid within a year, and we introduced novel management



methods. In the off season we reduced the price for one room by 50 percent and the price for food by one-fourth. New investments were financed through personal contributions. The success of our venture was stunning. The number of guests increased and personnel could be increased from twenty-two employees to forty and during the season to fifty. Up to this time there has been no profit distribution. Although the ownership question has not been resolved so far, we are opposed to nationalization. Whatever will be, we are resolutely prepared to defend our achievement.

The resort hotel Praja Grande was the first under self-administration in the hotel industry of Portugal. There were more to come later.

### **Screw Factory Florescente, Lisbon**

This plant, the biggest producer of screws in Portugal, was founded half a century ago. At the time of our visit there were 240 workers, including 40 women. One week after the overthrow of the dictatorship—to be exact on May 1, 1974—the crew went on strike for higher wages. Shop stewards, called “Comision de Trabalhadores” (workers’ commissions) were elected. The negotiations dragged on for months without results. On February 28, 1975 the workers occupied the plant, posted unarmed guards and refused to admit the owner or his confidantes. The government and the Federation of Unions requested the surrender of the plant, without success. Later on the authorities became reconciled to self-administration. The reason: prolonged idleness of the plant would have resulted in a considerably diminished supply of screws and bolts. The Department of Labor secured a loan from a nationalized bank. Management consisted of a committee of eight persons; responsibility was with the workers’ council (shop stewardship). Preliminary difficulties were overcome in a few months. As one machinist said: “Today we work for ourselves; everyone deploys his own initiative without undue interference from bureaucrats. Together with technicians we discuss ways for increased production. Wages and working conditions are settled by a full meeting of the crew.” The workers were still not very clear as to what would be the best solution for them but they all were satisfied with self-administration. “But when one day, a government in favor of free enterprise wants to declare self-administration illegal, what then?” I asked. “Then we will put up stiff resistance,” they replied.



### **Lisuave Remains Private**

“Why did the radical revolutionary council not nationalize the biggest private enterprise, employing 8,700 workers and employees, the shipyard Lisuave?” we asked. The answer of the chief shop steward Carlos Gomez was: “Because it is a multinational undertaking; 50 percent of its shares of stock is owned by Swedish and Dutch capitalists.” After the outbreak of the revolution there were no labor troubles in the shipyards of Lisuave. The wages are not lower than in other nationalized industries. Working hours are the same, forty-two hours weekly. Besides there are four weeks vacation and an annual bonus of one month’s salary. A crew assembly elected a workers’ commission consisting of eighty-seven members (one for each hundred employees and fifteen shop stewards). The workers’ commission had the right to vote hirings and firings and be privy to methods of production and management (including purchase and sales contracts). According to an ordinance of August 1974 it is not mandatory but permissible to elect, in enterprises employing more than fifty workers, one shop steward who has the power to examine production projects as well as investment goals and to evaluate, assess and supervise the production process. The chief shop steward of Lisuave, Carlos Gomez himself, was not impressed by laws promulgated by a bourgeois society. The objective of workers’ commissions can optimally only be to prepare the laborers for the victory of people’s power. He showed us a resolution taken at a plant meeting which said: “Workers’ control of production is of decisive importance for the preparation and practical execution of the socialist nationalization of industry.

### **The Red South**

The word “Alentejo” means beyond the river Tejo. Alentejo is the region south of Lisbon. Its social structure is similar to that of neighboring Andalusia. A small number of owners of big feudal estates and a large majority of landless agricultural workers. It is here that an agrarian revolution was expected and came about in fact. Alentejo is not entirely Communist as was so loudly proclaimed. In Vimieiro, a village of 3,000 inhabitants, where ten private estates were converted into self-administration enterprises, elections of



April 25, 1975 gave 270 votes to the Communists and 17 to the closely connected MDF (Democratic Peoples Party) whereas the Socialists received 930 and the Peoples Democrats 480 votes.

The small tenant farmers and laborers who occupied the land of their former lords were in the majority not Communists. The fact that so many Communist posters are seen proves only that the party is well heeled. Most of the inhabitants to whom I spoke declared not to belong to any party. The first occupation took place February 11, 1975 on a 785-acre estate named, since then, Cooperativa Santana. In a short time nine other cooperatives of different sizes were added. On one of the farm buildings was a sign which read in large letters: "Occupado Pelas Cooperativas."

What drove the peaceful agricultural workers and small tenant farmers to revolt? Were professional revolutionaries prompting them? For an answer we have to take a look at the past. Property relations have not changed for several hundred years. In decades past the dictatorship held its protective hand over the big landholders. At the outbreak of the revolution 500 feudal lords owned more land than 500,000 small peasants and tenant farmers. Three thousand feudal lords (5.4 percent of the population) owned more than 100 acres; the small peasants (90 percent of the total population) on the other hand owned less than one acre and often less than half an acre. The *patron* (boss) came only occasionally for a visit, often with a hunting party, and he left part of the land he owned fallow.

In northern Portugal 70 percent of the small peasants own so little land that their harvest leaves them very little beyond their own needs. Of the total population, 30 percent are employed in agriculture, against 6 or even 4 percent in industrialized countries. Although Portugal is an agricultural country the total of agricultural production is insufficient to feed its population. About one-third of the needed food has to be imported. Methods of production are obsolete and the feudal lords of the south were not interested in modernization. Reforms were overdue.

A structural change was expected from the April revolution but the politicians at that time had other thoughts. The radical officers of the revolutionary council sent a task force



to the south to propagandize the revolution among the agricultural laborers. However, Communist propaganda proved to be unnecessary. Small peasants and agricultural workers took action on their own initiative. A few of the older ones might have remembered the anarchosyndicalist slogans from before and also the colectividades of the Spanish Civil War might not have been entirely unknown.

Jose Bento, land laborer, fifty-one years old and illiterate, did not know anything of socialist or communist theories, but he had horse sense and initiative. He worked as a day laborer for a big landlord and had a few quarrels with his patron. At a meeting on February 18, 1975 he proposed occupation of the estate and establishment of a cooperative. His motion was carried. Eighteen families, comprising thirty-eight adults, participated. An administration committee was elected consisting of five persons. The estate, which consisted of 705 acres and had livestock totalling 30 cows, 250 sheep and 25 pigs was taken over by the coop.

Little did they care how the owner, living in the city, would react; whether or not he would take legal action was of no concern to them. The government did not act. The Agrarian Insitute granted a credit of 300,000 Escudos.

Wages for male workers were increased from 150 to 180 and for female workers from 70 to 130 Escudos per month. The collective also assumed payment of workers' insurance. Retirement age was set at sixty-five years. The changeover from private enterprise to collective met with few difficulties. The collective community decided to also work land which hitherto had been left fallow by the former owner. A few months later the Agrarian Insitute officially recognized the collectivization. It is alleged that the government compensated the former owners. The collective was permitted to work the land which did not imply the right to sell it.

### **Casebres**

In the face of the uncertainties about coming events some big estate owners in Casebres, in the district of Alcasar del Sol, closed down their agricultural enterprises. Eighty-seven men and fifty-four women were thrown out of work by this action. On March 1, 1975 they occupied the farm buildings, founded a production collective and started to work the land,



part of which was fallow. The size of this cooperative was more than 4,300 acres. The solution of the legal problems arising out of this land seizure was left to the Agrarian Institute. The collectivists elected three commissions consisting of six members each: one for supervision of labor, the second for sales and purchases and the third for bookkeeping and administration. Agricultural machinery was contributed by small tenant farmers who later joined the collective. Produced were rice, maize, tomatoes and peppers. Also harvested were olives and cork. The Department of Agriculture granted the credit for ten years. All important business was discussed in a full meeting of the crew and also settled there. Weekly wages for men were set at 800 and for women 500 Escudos. Our question as to why women were given a lower pay than men was not clearly answered. Tradition not yet overcome! We believe that in time women's wages will become equalized. Among the inhabitants were socialists, communists, anarchists and different religious groups. Asked about questions of party politics, the collectivists said: Labor unifies and politics separates!

### Initiative of Women

The establishment of the Cooperativa 1 de Maio (first of May) in Gambia in the district of Setubal is unique because the initiative came from women who were employed on the 700-acre estate of Jose Paula Borba, an engineer. The owner's permanent residence was in the capital. After futile wage negotiations he fired all of his employees. But they did not want to stay unemployed. On July 14, 1975, twenty-eight women and twenty men occupied the estate—with the women in the vanguard—and founded a cooperative. The beginning was difficult. Request for a loan was declined by the Agrarian Institute. There was no working capital and no money to pay wages. But the class comrades of the neighboring countryside in a move of solidarity gave a helping hand. On weekends they came in droves from the city to help bring in the harvest.

In time the difficulties and hardships were overcome. When we visited in 1975 a mood of optimism prevailed. The fear of unemployment had receded and the members of the cooperative were looking into the future with justified hope.



The women were rightfully proud of all the accomplishments.

### **Cooperative Without Expropriation**

The peasant cooperative Agres, in the district of Torres Vedras, was founded in the spirit of Kropotkin's mutual aid. Two Portuguese who returned from France in 1974 were hired to help pick olives. Spanish émigrés had told them of the colectividades during the civil war. In revolutionary Portugal there was a strong propensity for collectivization. This facilitated finding sympathizers for the organization of cooperatives. One empathetic peasant presented them with a gift of one acre of land for experimental purposes. Very soon a few small peasants formed a group. A philanthropic resident contributed several acres of land (only the land tax had to be paid by the group). In January 1975 they started out with 200 acres of land, 3,000 grape vines, 2,000 olive trees and substantial tomato plantations. The Agrarian Institute granted a credit of 300,000 Escudos and a nationalized bank another 800,000 Escudos at very favorable conditions. Following the principle "To everybody according to his needs," they instituted a sort of family wage system. Profits were to be distributed after the close of the harvest year in equal parts to all members. Two workers who were taken over with the land were given the opportunity to decide within a year whether or not they wished to join the community as full fledged members. It was also decided to open a grocery store. The setup reminded me of the Moschaw Shitufi, the modified form of the Israeli kibbutz.

### **From Revolution to Evolution**

In the course of two years the center of gravity of the Portuguese revolution shifted from the officer's mess and parliament to the workbench and the land. The revolution was comparatively bloodless due to the fact that the army was in the revolutionary camp. The generals themselves triggered it off. As usual there were radical and moderate groups among the revolutionaries. After the crushing of the parachutists' revolt the revolutionary élan was spent. The period of street fighting also ended. The political activity was reduced to the preparation of the parliamentary and presidential elections. The elections went on in orderly fashion and the powers of



moderation won a majority. The president elect was also a man of the middle. Now it was time to appraise the situation and find out what the revolution had really achieved.

On the credit side of the balance sheet was the abolition of the dictatorship and the establishment of political democracy, so long awaited by the people of Portugal. But this was not all. Added should be the beginning of economic democracy with its objective of social justice. Many private enterprises were changed into collectives. After establishment of hundreds of collectives, an agrarian reform bill was enacted on July 29, 1975 permitting expropriations of estates of more than 700 acres. Later the permissible maximum of private ownership was set at 50 acres. By August 31, 1975, 426 agricultural collectives—formerly in private ownership—were officially registered. In Baja, province of Alentejo, 60 percent of formerly private estates were under collective administration; in the province of Evora, 230,000 acres were estimated to have been expropriated.

Even where, due to certain circumstances, autonomous collective enterprises were not possible, remarkable social progress was made; the employees had a right to veto hirings and firings of labor, a work week of forty-two hours, one month vacation and a thirteenth monthly wage payment were all introduced. In enterprises of more than fifty workers a workers' council elected by the crew had legal standing. These achievements put Portugal on the way to economic democracy. All signs point to the fact that Portugal, like Mexico half a century before, was started on a period of evolutionary development. Now it is important to consolidate and defend all that has been accomplished and to ward off any attempt of reactionary forces to nullify what has been achieved.



## *Chapter 24*

### **Summary**

It always seemed to me that the way of endeavor is preferable to what has actually been attained. In summing up my life I did not hesitate to compress my life's work into the lapidary sentence: "Great ambition, little achievement." When I was young I believed in the chiliastic realm of "liberty, equality and fraternity." Today, I believe in a continuous evolutionary process more than in an imaginary world.

At the end of World War I we, the radicals of the left, hoped that the Russian Revolution was the beginning of a new era, similar to that of the French Revolution of 1789. However, the Bolshevik dictatorship, which suppressed not only the followers of czarism but also dissident revolutionaries, was a bitter disappointment.

I was called a "student of revolution." This is correct insofar as participation in the revolutions of this century was the greater part of my life's work. When I was fifteen years old I heard from my father the fairy tale of dialectical materialism, according to which it is a law of nature that capitalism must be in time replaced by socialism. I abandoned this superstition later in my life. I never became a professional revolutionary because I did not want to make a living on the basis of revolutionary activities. I do not see revolution as a goal but only as an accelerated phase of development. Trotsky's thesis of the "permanent revolution" is a propaganda slogan. The expression is attributed to Karl Marx; a state of lasting



revolution never existed in history. Revolutions break out when unbearable economic and political, social or national situations trigger revolt. They end with the dying down of collective energies. This was the case with the last revolution in Portugal. The depth, duration, content and significance of revolutions cannot be foreseen. At first I believed in the might of the revolution but later I was well aware of its limitations. Two phases can be seen in revolutionary developments: at first overthrow of the old rulers and then establishment of a new revolutionary power. The process is violent and rarely without bloodshed. The revolutions of the twentieth century had—with few exceptions—two faces: one showing the liberating revolt and the other the oppressive dictatorship. It was like this from Russia to Cuba. In 1921 had the sailors of Kronstadt, together with the Left Social Revolutionaries, the Maximalists, syndicalists and anarchists, been victorious, Soviet Russia would be today an authentic socialist republic with autonomous collectives and political freedoms, without the shame of prisons, work and concentration camps and mental institutions for political opponents. I have learned three lessons from my experiences:

1. Individual force is not a means towards establishment of a free society. Collective force is inevitable during revolutions but its effects are limited. It contributes to the overthrow of a dictatorship or oppressive government. However, liberty is again endangered when the leaders become dictators. The most outstanding examples in our century are Lenin, Stalin and Castro.

2. A victorious social revolution can succeed in distributing wealth between all in a grandiose manner but cannot guarantee well-being for all times.

3. Communism, established as party dictatorship, abolished all political freedom obtained in the past century but the economic equality so boastfully propagandized failed to materialize. Hence it is not in the interest of workers to support the power struggle of Communist parties.

I was often asked: Why could anarchism never prevail? Is this not attributable to its unrealistic utopian objectives? I answered: Every social objective has utopian features. Only its materialization shows what is unrealistic. Anarchism is by no means merely utopia; it has eminently practical traits. The



most important libertarian social experiments of the twentieth century are the collective enterprises in Spain during the civil war and the kibbutzim in Israel. In both cases we have to do with the realization of an anarchist concept as outlined by Proudhon, Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer. The outgrowth of the initiative of the participants of the Spanish *collectividades* and the Israeli kibbutzim is built on fundamental social justice and personal freedom. They were and are still functioning effectively without outer compulsion and government interference. Social contrasts are nonexistent. The *collectividades* and kibbutzim are proof that free communities are possible in practice and that libertarian socialism is not a utopia. At closer look, the utopian feature of anarchism is nothing else but libertarian humanism. What today is believed to be an "unrealistic economic order" has been seen in the past century by anarchist theorists of the Marxist school of political science as a socialist federalist alternative. The demand of today's unions for co-determination and self-determination in factories was always the objective of the anarchists. The demand for general disarmament and international control of arms production, a slogan of anarchists of the past century, is today the request of all fighters for peace. On the new continent, especially in the U.S., there is no more anarchist-baiting. I was on a six weeks lecture tour in the U.S. and Canada during the summer of 1976. On July 18 the Rev. Bruce Southworth gave a Sunday sermon on "Anarchism and Politics" in the Community Church of New York, which was also broadcast. The next day I spoke in the same church about the anarchist way to socialism. In Philadelphia, Minneapolis and New Orleans I was given the opportunity to speak in churches. Above the pulpit was the picture of a Spanish militia man. Radio stations of several cities invited me to speak about anarchism. In a dozen cities I was the house guest of sympathetic professors, students, workers and intellectuals. Thus I came to know another America, the America of the idealists who want to transform society. In these circles I encountered fighting spirit combined with practical, altruistic solidarity. The Americans, descendants of daring immigrants, will fight without western European help to maintain freedom and achieve social justice.

A last word: The social problems of today are not the



same as those of the beginning of this century. Power relations have shifted, and the conditions of life changes. With technical and industrial progress enormous as they are we can expect—barring an apocalyptic catastrophe—that by the end of the twenty-first century mass misery will have disappeared and the social contrasts minimized. Then we will see that the bread and butter question is not the social problem. New problems, unknown today, will arise. One example: half a century ago the word and concept of “ecology” was familiar only to experts; today, however, it is commonplace. Around 1900 the working people were fighting for bread but in the 1960s students revolted against authoritarian establishments. In the year 2000 will freedom-loving men and women have to fight again to overthrow dictatorships and authoritarian regimes? An old social problem will certainly remain also in the future. That is the antagonism between authority and freedom. As in the past the pendulum of history will also swing between the opposite poles: authority as opposed to freedom.

When socio-economic problems are resolved, socio-psychic complications will arise. Complete conformism will never be attained, even in a classless society. In the past political and social contrasts between those exercising authority (mostly belonging to the older generations) and the youth outside the establishment institutions have led to violent outbreaks. This has not changed even today but it does not mean that it will always be the same. It is not utopian to propagate the solution of all social contradiction by peaceful means. The non-violent contrast between generations of social, economic and ethnically different groups is spiritually fruitful, creative and progressive.

The objectives of anarchists have always been and are today: prosperity for all, freedom for everybody and respect for the dignity of man—unfortunately only theoretically recognized by governments—and, I might add, universal peace. But as long as power systems exist, nothing will change. My goal is the establishment of a social order free of force to replace organized compulsion and violence.

— THE END —



## Afterword

Augustin Souchy's account of his life ends in the late 1970s, but his tireless efforts continued for several more years despite the inevitable infirmities of advancing age (he lost the sight of an eye and suffered from lung problems). Until his death in 1984, he maintained a crowded schedule of debates, speaking engagements and radio talks, and continued writing articles, polemics and pamphlets; he also kept up a staggering international correspondence. All this was more than enough for one half his age. In his summation he deplored, "Great ambition, little achievement." Souchy was too modest. It actually *was* much accomplished.

Souchy's seventy-five-year career practically spans twentieth-century anarchism, World Wars I and II, and the major revolutions and counter-revolutions of modern times. A history of modern anarchism that does not take Souchy's career into account would not be worth reading. Historians as well as activists seeking the truthful record of people who actually participated in this history will draw inspiration from Souchy's life in the movement. His book is indispensable.

The triumphant counter-revolutions in Russia, Spain, China, Cuba, and elsewhere; the apathy of the workers and the venality of the class-collaborationist labor movement in



the so-called “free” world, particularly its failure to come to the aid of the once-flourishing anarcho-syndicalist international movement—all these bitter dissappointments led many militant anarchists to modify their views.

Souchy, too, naturally modified some of his views. For this he was ostracized by intolerant comrades who violently disagreed with him. They did not realize that in fighting spirit, in devotion to our cause, he remained steadfast to his dying breath. Thus he enthusiastically hailed the revival of the Spanish CNT—the anarchosyndicalist National Workers’ Federation—after dictator Franco’s death. At the advanced age of 86, and in poor health, Souchy made an exhausting speaking tour through the United States and Canada to collect funds to help our Spanish fellow workers. To save hotel bills and other expenses, he stayed in the homes of comrades (ours when in New York). At the end of his talks he fervently recalled the revolutionary spirit of the stirring times of the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In a voice ringing with emotion he sang the battle hymns of the revolutionary CNT-FAI: “Hijos de Pueblo” and “Los Barricados.”

The subtitle of his book, *A Life for Freedom*, is a fitting tribute to the memory of my old friend and comrade, Augustin Souchy.

Sam Dolgoff



## Biographical Notes

- Diego Abad de Santillán** Born 1897. Spanish anarchosyndicalist and historian. Emigrated as a youngster with his family to Argentina, returned 1912 to Spain. In 1918 he went to Argentina again where he was instrumental in the building of the anarchist movement FORA. In 1931 again in Spain, member of FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica), leading economic expert of Spanish anarchosyndicalism. In December 1936 economic advisor to the Catalanian Regional Government. After the end of the civil war he went to France and thence to Argentina, where he worked mainly as a historian. After the end of Franco's rule he returned to Spain. Publications: *El organismo economico de la revolution*, 1936; *After the Revolution: Economic Reconstruction in Spain Today*, New York, 1937; *Contribucion a la historia del movimiento Español*, 1962; *Economy and Revolution* (together with Juan Peiró), published and translated by Thomas Kleinspehn, Berlin, 1975.
- Raphael Abramovitch** 1879-1963. Russian socialist (Menshevik), belonged to the internationalist wing during World War I, arrested 1921. After his release he emigrated to the U.S. and was active in the exile organization of the Mensheviks. Publications: *The Soviet Revolution 1917-1939*, New York, 1944.
- Peter Arshinov** Russian anarchist, comrade-in-arms of Nestor Makhno and historian of the Makhno movement (*History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921*, Black & Red, Detroit/Solidarity, Chicago, 1974).
- Francisco Ascaso** 1901-1936. Spanish anarchist from the early 1900s. Comrade of Durruti, killed the second day of the civil war in the assault on the Atarazanas Barracks in Barcelona.
- Michael Bakunin** 1814-1876. Russian anarchist, founder of the collectivist and social revolutionary anarchist movement. Came from the Russian aristocracy and participated in the February revolution in 1848 and other European uprisings, spent six years in prison, subsequently deported to Siberia whence he escaped by way of the U.S. to London. In 1868 founded the International Alliance of Social Democracy in Geneva. Conflict of opinion between Marx and Bakunin within the First International, 1872, led to expulsion of Bakunin. A three-volume edition of his works was published 1921-1924 in Berlin (reprinted Berlin, 1975). See also *Statism and Anarchy*, Berlin 1972; *Philosophy of Action*, introduction by Rainer Beer, Cologne, 1968.
- Roger Nash Baldwin** Born 1884. From 1950 to 1956 chaired the American Civil Liberties Union. For many years also chairman of the International League for Human Rights. Since 1950 honorary president of this organization.
- August Bebel** 1840-1913. Leader of the German Social Democrats before World War I, master turner. In 1869 founded, together with Wilhelm Liebknecht the German Social Democratic Workers Party. From 1867 member of parliament.



**Alexander Berkman** 1870-1936. Anarchist, born in Russia. Came to the U.S. in 1886 and joined the anarchist movement, spent fourteen years in jail for the attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick, manager-in-chief of the Carnegie Steel Co. in Homestead, Pennsylvania to protest military action against striking steelworkers resulting in the death of eleven workers. After his release he continued his activities as propagandist for the anarchist movement. During World War I he organized, together with Emma Goldman, an antimilitarist campaign. At the end of 1919 he was deported to the Soviet Union. During the Kronstadt insurrection March 21, he was in Petrograd and appealed, together with Emma Goldman, to Zinoviev, chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, not to use force against the rebellious sailors. At the end of 1921 he left Bolshevik Russia. On June 28, 1936 he committed suicide in St. Tropez. Publications include *The Kronstadt Rebellion*, Berlin, 1923; *The Russian Tragedy*, Berlin, 1923; *Memoirs of a Prison Anarchist*, Berlin, 1927; *ABC of Anarchism*, 1929.

**Camillo Berneri** 1897-1937. Italian anarchist, Professor of Philosophy, in 1926 left Fascist Italy for exile in France and from there into other countries. For several weeks he was my houseguest in Berlin. After the outbreak of the civil war in Spain he went there to edit in 1936 the biweekly *Guerra di Classe* (Class Struggle) where he warned of Communist totalitarianism. During the night of May 5-6, 1937 he was arrested by the Communists and killed. Publications include: *Class War in Spain*, *Against Fascism* and *Bourgeois Republic*, Berlin, 1974.

**Eduard Bernstein** 1850-1932. Social democratic theoretician and politician. His books *The Preliminaries of Socialism* and *The Tasks of Social Democracy* were fundamental for social democratic revisionism and reformism.

**Mikhail Borodin (Grusenberg)** 1884-1951. Russian Communist, specialist on foreign affairs delegated to Mexico and Great Britain. From 1923 to 1927 he was consultant to the Chinese Kuomintang government.

**Archibald Fenner Brockway** Born 1888. English socialist. During World War I he was one of the organizers of the conscientious objectors; from 1923 to 1928 president of the No More War movement and the War Resisters International. From 1923 to 1926 and again from 1933 to 1939 Secretary General, and from 1939 to 1946 Political Secretary of the Independent Labour Party. From 1929 to 1931 and from 1950 to 1964 Labour member of the House of Commons. Since 1964, as Baron Brockway, member of the House of Lords. Publications include *Inside the Left*, London, 1942.

**Fritz Brupbacher** 1874-1944. Swiss physician, revolutionary syndicalist and antimilitarist. Publications include *Marx and Bakunin*, 1913 (reprint Berlin, 1969); *60 Years a Heretic* (autobiography), Zurich, 1935 (reprint Zurich 1973).

**Martin Buber** 1878-1965. Jewish philosopher. Born in Vienna, early Zionist under the influence of Gustav Landauer, with whom he had friendly relations. He was a representative of a libertarian agricultural



- cooperative movement. Until 1938 in Germany he was Professor of Comparative Religious Science at the University of Frankfurt; after 1938 Professor at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. For understanding Buber's philosophy: *Ways in Utopia*, Heidelberg, 1950 (reprint Koeln, 1967 under the title *The Utopian Socialism*).
- Albert Camus** 1913-1960. French author, professed libertarian socialist. See *Men in Revolt*, Reinbeck, 1969.
- Lazaro Cardenas** 1895-1970. Mexican general and politician; in 1931 Secretary of the Interior; in 1933 Secretary of War; President of Mexico 1942-45. He promoted the expropriation of large landholdings in favor of redistribution and cooperatives of small peasants, nationalized railway system and expropriated (1938) British and North American oil companies.
- Christian Cornelissen** 1864-1942. Dutch economist and syndicalist. Together with Domela Nieuwenhuis he worked for the syndicalist federation National Arbeids Secretariat, founded in 1893. Publications include: *Théorie de la Valeur, Réfutation des theories de Rodbertus, Karl Marx, Stanley Jevons et Boehm Bawerk*, 1903 (Theory of Value, Refutation of the Theories of Rodbertus, Karl Marx, Stanley Jevons and Boehm Bawerk).
- Leon Czolgosz** Anarchist born in Poland. Emigrated to the U.S. and was railroad worker in Detroit. On September 6, 1901 he killed the American president William McKinley in Buffalo, New York. Sentenced to death, he was executed in 1901.
- Dan Fjodor Iljitch (F. I. Gurwitsch)** Russian socialist (Menshevik). in 1917 member of the presidium of the Petrograd Soviet. Opponent of Bolshevism. In 1922 expelled from the Soviet Union. He went to Berlin, then Paris and in 1940 to the U.S. After the death of Martov he was the leader of the Mensheviks in exile.
- Porfirio Diaz** 1830-1915. Mexican politician 1877-1880 and president of Mexico 1884-1912 (resigned after the outbreak of the revolution). He favored the large estates and American capitalism.
- Alfred Doeblin** 1878-1957. German writer, from 1912 neurologist in Berlin. Emigrated to France in 1933 and thence to the U.S. After World War II temporary consultant for cultural relations of the French Military Government in Germany.
- Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis** 1846-1919. Dutch socialist. At first a Lutheran parson, he resigned in 1897 and left the church. In 1897 he broke with social democracy and a year later founded the libertarian socialist magazine *De Vrije Socialist*.
- Eugen Duehring** 1833-1921. In 1864 joined the University of Berlin as Professor of Economics and Philosophy. However, in 1877 he lost the right to give lectures as a result of controversies with the faculty and became a free publicist and private researcher.
- Buenaventura Durruti** Spanish anarchist. At first a locksmith, member of the CNT. Together with Ascaso, he undertook many raids and assassination attempts in the 1920s. Lived temporarily in Germany, Argentina and France, from 1932 again in Spain. During the civil war leader of the Brigade Durruti named after him. On November



19, 1936 he was seriously injured and died the following day. See Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *The Short Summer of Anarchy—Buenaventura's Life and Death*, Frankfurt Main 1972, 1975; Abel Paz, *Durruti—Le Peuple en armes* (people in arms), Paris 1972.

**Sébastien Faure** 1858–1942. French anarchist. Editor of the anarchist publication *Le Libertaire*. Founded in 1904 (lasted until 1917) a boarding school for poor children on the basis of libertarian education. Editor of a four-volume *Encyclopedia of Anarchism*.

**Francisco Ferrer Guardia** 1859–1909. Spanish libertarian education expert; founded in 1901 in Barcelona the first Spanish *Escuela Moderna* (Modern School) for non-church education on a rationalistic basis, provoking violent reaction from churchmen. In July 1909 protest demonstrations were organized against the unpopular Moroccan war followed by a general strike and martial law. Ferrer (who was outside of Spain at the beginning of the protest movement) was arrested and accused of instigating the upheaval (actually because of his libertarian and anticlerical views). He was sentenced to death and executed on October 13, 1909. This miscarriage of justice led to widespread protest movements all over Europe. Publications include *The School*, Berlin, 1975.

**Fidus (Hugo Hoeppner)** 1868–1948. German illustrator and graphic artist.

**Juan García Oliver** Spanish anarchist and Minister of Justice in the Largo Caballero government during the civil war.

**Helmut von Gerlach** 1866–1935. Liberal publicist and politician. Founding member of the German Society for Peace; president of the German League for the Rights of Men; editor in chief of the *Welt am Montag* (World on Monday), Berlin. In 1933 emigrated to Austria and thence to Paris.

**Emma Goldman** 1869–1940. American anarchist of Russian origin. From 1886 in the U.S. editor of the periodical *Mother Earth*; champion of the women's liberation movement and birth control, engaged in the fight for peace and antimilitarism. Deported, together with Alexander Berkman and other revolutionary anarchists and socialists, to Russia. Protested to Lenin against the persecution of anarchists and syndicalists and warned Zinoviev, with Berkman, against violent action against the mutineers of Kronstadt (March 1921). By the end of 1921, disillusioned with the character of the Bolshevik system, she left the USSR. Lived in France, Canada and other countries and died in Toronto, Canada. Publications include *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 1910; *The Causes of the Failure of the Russian Revolution*, Berlin, 1922 (reprint Berlin 1968); *Living My Life* (autobiography), 1931; *Red Emma Speaks* (selected writings and speeches by Emma Goldman, compiled and edited by Alix Kate Shulman), New York, 1972. See also: Richard Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise*, Chicago, 1961; Alix Kate Shulman, *To the Barricades, The Anarchist Life of Emma Goldman*, New York, 1971; David Porter (ed.), *Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution*, New Paltz, NY, 1983.



- Alfons Goldschmidt** 1879-?. German political scientist. Publications include: *The Economic Organization of the Soviet Union*, Moscow, 1920; *When I Saw Moscow Again*, 1925.
- Jean Grave** 1854-1939. French anarchist. From 1883 to 1914 editor in chief of *La Révolte* and *Temps Nouveaux*. Publications include: *La Société mourante et l'anarchie* (Dying Society and Anarchy), 1893; *La Société Future* (Future Society), 1895.
- Rudolf Grossman** (pseudonym: **Pierre Ramus**) 1860-1942. Austrian anarchist and publicist. Edited from 1919 to 1927 *Cognition and Liberation* and from 1927 to 1933 *The Anarchist*. Other publications mostly under the name Pierre Ramus.
- Adolf Hoffman** 1858-1930. Social democrat, journalist and politician. In 1902 member of parliament; in 1908 member of the Prussian House of Deputies. After the November revolution he was director of the Prussian Department of Culture; from 1920 to 1924 member of the Reichstag (as Communist). His publication, *The Ten Commandments of the Propertied Class*, was widely read and he was nicknamed The Ten Commandments Hoffman (fifteen editions by 1922).
- Jean Jaurès** 1859-1914. Leader of the French socialists before World War I. Internationalist and antimilitarist. Killed before the outbreak of World War I by a French chauvinist.
- Albert Otto Jensen** 1879-1949. Swedish syndicalist. First a watchmaker, then a publicist. Founding member of the SAC (Central organization of Swedish workers) and the Syndicalist International (1922), editor in chief of the syndicalist daily *Arbetaren*, and editor of the periodical *Syndicalism*. Second marriage with Elise Ottensen Jensen.
- Elise Ottesen Jensen** 1886-1973. Born in Norway. Swedish psychologist, champion of birth control, wife of the syndicalist Albert Otto Jensen.
- Karl Korsch** 1886-1961. Socialist theoretician and politician. Member of the SPD, USPD and KPD; in 1926 expelled from the Communist Party; in 1923 professor for civil and labor law at the University of Jena; minister of justice in the coalition government SPD-KPD of Thuringia in 1923; member of the Reichstag in 1924; in 1933 dismissed by the Nazis. He emigrated first to England and, after his expulsion, by way of Sweden, Holland and France to the U.S. (1936). Publications include: *Marxism and Philosophy*, 1923 (reprint Frankfurt Main 1966); *Essays Regarding Socialization*, edited by Erich Gerlach, Frankfurt Main, 1969. Political texts edited by Erich Gerlach and Juergen Seifert, Frankfurt Main, 1974. Korsch reviewed Augustin Souchy's report about collectivization in Spain in his periodical for social research (vol. 7) and 1939 in *Living Marxism* (vol. 4).
- Peter Kropotkin** 1842-1921. Descendant of a princely family, became a scientific geographer; however, he renounced his scientific career in favor of his social-revolutionary ideas. Imprisoned 1874 in the Peter and Paul Fortress, he succeeded in fleeing to England after



two years of imprisonment. Later he went to live in Switzerland where he was much impressed by the libertarian socialist Jura Federation. From 1886 to 1917 Kropotkin lived in England. Due to his many publications translated into many languages he became the most important theoretician of communist anarchism. After the 1917 revolution he returned to Russia and was soon deeply disappointed because of the centralist and dictatorial tendencies of the men in power. He died February 8, 1921 in the village of Dmitrov. His funeral two days later was the last public demonstration of anarchism in Bolshevik Russia. Publications include: *The Conquest of Bread*, 1892; *Prosperity for All*, Berlin, 1919; *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, 1898, Berlin, 1904; *Mutual Aid*, Leipzig, 1908; *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, Stuttgart, 1900 (reprint Frankfurt, 1969). The main publications of Kropotkin are to be had from the publishing house Karin Kramer, Berlin. See also: Ivan Avacumovic, *The Anarchist Prince*, London, 1950.

**Gustav Landauer** 1879–1919. German writer and anarchist. Founded in 1908 the libertarian socialist Socialist Federation and edited the periodical *The Socialist* 1909–1915. In April 1919 deputy of people's information in the second Bavarian Soviet Republic. Arrested May 1919 by "white" officers and soldiers, he was murdered in Stadelheim Prison. Publications include: *Scepsis and Mystic*, 1903; *The Revolution*, 1907 (reprint Berlin, 1974); *Appeal to Socialism*, 1911, 1919 (reprint Berlin, 1974); *Shakespeare*, 1920; *The Developing Human Being*, 1921; *Beginning, Essays about Socialism*, 1924. See also: *One Life in Letters*, published by Martin Buber, 1929; *Gustav Landauer and the Time of Revolution, 1918–1919* (speeches, writings, ordinances and letters), published by Ulrich Linse, Berlin, 1974; *Cognition and Liberation* (selected essays and speeches), published by Ruth Link-Salinger, Frankfurt Main, 1974; Wolfgang Kalz, *Gustav Landauer, Socialist and Anarchist*, Mannheim Glan, 1967; Eugen Lunn, *Prophet of Community, the Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer*, London, 1973.

**Leo Lania (Lazar Herrman)** 1896–1961. Russian-born writer living until 1933 in Germany; emigrated later with Erwin Piscator, founder of the political theater.

**Francisco Largo Caballero** 1869–1946. Spanish socialist. From 1932 to 1935 chairman of the Socialist Workers Party. Leader of the socialist union UGT. From September 1936 to May 1937 prime minister of the Republican government. After the civil war he went into exile in France, was detained from 1942 to 1945 in the German concentration camp Oranienburg, died March 25, 1946 in Paris.

**Louis Lecoin** 1888–1970. French pacifist. Champion of a legally recognized right to be a conscientious objector and refuse military service. Memoirs: *Le cours d'une vie*.

**V. I. Lenin** 1870–1924. From 1903 leader of the Bolsheviks, the militant wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party. After the February revolution in 1917 returned to Russia from exile in Switzerland. After the October revolution first chairman of the Soviet.



- Gaston Leval** Born 1894. French libertarian socialist and publicist. Son of a Parisian Communeard; 1921 delegate of the Spanish CNT in Moscow. Active during the Spanish Civil War. Lives in Paris, where he edits the *Cahier de l'Humanisme Libertaire* (Notebook of Libertarian Humanism). Publications include: *The Libertarian Spain, the Constructive Side of the Spanish Revolution, 1936-1939*, Hamburg, 1976 (Paris, 1971). This book gives a detailed report on collectivization in Spain during the civil war and is an important complement to the works of Augustin Souchy on this topic.
- Karl Liebknecht** 1871-1919. Son of Wilhelm Liebknecht, prominent socialist. From 1900 member of the German Socialist Party; 1912-1917 member of the Reichstag; cofounder of the Spartakus Federation and by the end of 1918 of the Communist Party of Germany. Murdered together with Rosa Luxemburg January 15, 1919, by counterrevolutionary officers.
- Nestor Makhno** 1889-1934. Russian anarchist. Son of a poor peasant family in the Ukraine; first an agricultural laborer. He was sentenced to death for several acts of terrorism, sentence commuted to life in prison because he was a minor. Stayed in a Moscow prison until the February revolution. After his release he organized communes in the Ukraine and free labor soviets of peasants. The partisan army he led, consisting mostly of peasants, fought against the whites and the German occupation army, later also against the Red Army. At the end of August, 1921 he crossed the frontier into Rumania. He went by way of Poland to Paris and Germany, where he lived in very oppressive economic and psychological circumstances. He died in 1934. See Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921*, Black & Red, Detroit/Solidarity, Chicago, 1974; Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, Black & Red, Detroit/Solidarity, Chicago, 1974.
- John Henry Mackay** 1864-1933. Born in Scotland, a story teller and writer of novels, plays and poetry; living in Germany. Professed an individualistic anarchism. Publications include *The Anarchists* (a novel), 1891, reprinted 1976.
- Errico Malatesta** 1853-1932. Italian anarchist. After participation in several local revolts lived in exile with short interruptions from 1878 until 1914, mainly in London. In July 1914 he organized the social revolutionary movement in Ancona (Red Week) and a short general strike in Italy. Until the end of 1919 again in exile. Summer 1920 sit-in strikes in many Italian factories. Publisher of the anarchist daily *Umanita Nova* until its prohibition by the fascist government. See: Max Nettlau, *Errico Malatesta—The Life of an Anarchist*, Berlin, 1922 (reprint Berlin, 1972 under the title *The Revolutionary Actions of the Italian Proletariat and the Influence of Errico Malatesta*).
- L. Martov (Iu. O. Tsederbaum)** 1873-1923. Russian socialist (Menshevik); leader of the Menshevik left wing. After the October revolution highly critical of the terrorist methods of the Bolsheviks. In 1920 he went into exile in Germany. Publications include: *History of the Russian Social Democracy*, 1926
- Joaquín Maurín** 1897-1973. Spanish leftist, syndicalist. Member of



the Communist Party, expelled in 1931 because of his sympathies for Trotsky. Leader of the worker and peasant fraction which, together with the group led by Andrés Nin (Communist left) formed the POUM (Labor Party of Marxist Unity). Maurin was in prison at the outbreak of the civil war and escaped persecution by the Communists. Soon after the end of the civil war he was released. He died in New York.

**Gregorii P. Maximoff** 1893-1950. Russian anarchosyndicalist. Joined the revolutionary movement as a student and, after the revolution, was publisher and editor of the anarchosyndicalist paper *Golos Truda* (Voice of Labor) and *Novo Golos Truda* (New Voice of Labor). Arrested in March 1921 during the Kronstadt revolt. Went to Berlin and Paris and lived later in Chicago. Publications include *The Guillotine at Work*, *Twenty Years of Terror in Russia*, 1940; *Constructive Anarchism*, Chicago, 1952; *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, Glencoe, 1952.

**Louise Michel** 1830-1905. French anarchist. Participated in the Paris Commune and was, after the suppression of the commune, deported to New Caledonia.

**Pierre Monatte** 1881-1960. French syndicalist. From 1909 editor in chief of *Vie Ouvrière*. Opponent of militarism. After World War I a member of the Communist Party; expelled 1924. Founded in 1925 the revolutionary syndicalist periodical *La Révolution Proletarienne*.

**Johann Most** 1846-1906. German anarchist, bookbinder and early social democrat. Emigrated 1878 to England where he became an anarchist. Propagated direct action in his paper *Freiheit*. In 1889 expelled from the German Social Democratic Party; 1882 he went to the U.S. where he founded *Freiheit* again and from time to time influenced the anarchist movement. In his later years he repudiated his "Propaganda of Action," See: Rudolf Rocker, *Johann Most, the Life of a Rebel*, Berlin, 1924 (reprint 1973).

**Erich Muehsam** 1878-1934. German writer and anarchist. In 1919 a member of the Revolutionary Workers Soviet of the Bavarian Soviet Republic. Was imprisoned for his active participation until 1924. Published before World War I the periodical *Kain* and from 1926 to 1931 the anarchist monthly *Fanal*. Arrested February 28, 1933 by the Nazi regime and murdered in Orenburg concentration camp (official version: suicide). Publications include: *Liberation of Society from Statism*, 1932 (reprint Berlin, 1973).

**Willy Meunzenberg** 1889-1940. German Communist. In 1920 leader of the Communist Youth International. Book and newspaper publisher from 1933 in Paris, London and Brussels, where he organized the fight against the Nazi regime.

**Juan Negrín** 1894-1956. Spanish socialist politician. In 1936-37 Secretary of the Treasury, from May 1937 to March 1939 Prime Minister of the Spanish Republican government.

**Max Nettlau** 1865-1944. Historian of anarchism. Born in Austria, in London from 1885 to 1890. Member of the Socialist League, mainly under the influence of Kropotkin; turned to anarchism. In 1897 he



published in Brussels a voluminous *Bibliographie de l'anarchie* (reprinted New York, 1969). After studies of the history of anarchism in London, Paris, Geneva and Barcelona, Nettlau settled in Amsterdam. See: biographical and bibliographic data on Max Nettlau in March 1940 issue of *International Review of Social History*, Vol. XIV (1969). Publications include: *The Beginning of Anarchy, Its Historic Development up to the Year 1864*, Berlin, 1925; *Anarchism from Proudhon to Kropotkin, 1859-1880*, Berlin, 1927; *Anarchists and Social Revolutionaries (1880-1886)*, Berlin, 1931; *Michael Bakunin's Collected Works* (publisher), Berlin, 1921-24. About Nettlau: Rudolf Rocker, *Max Nettlau—El Herodoto de la Anarquia*, Mexico, 1950 (German edition in preparation).

**Friedrich Georg Nicolai** 1874-1964. German physician and philosopher, assistant professor for physiology at the University of Berlin. Author of *Appeal to the Europeans* in 1914 and was also a member of the anti-annexationist Federation New Fatherland. Demoted from physician-in-chief of a hospital to the work of a medic with the rank of private, he succeeded in fleeing by airplane to Denmark. Full professor of internal medicine in Zagreb, then Berlin. Nicolai emigrated around 1920 to Latin America and was a professor in Chile and Argentina. Publications include: *The Biology of War, Observations of a Naturalist*, etc.

**Andrés Nin** 1892-1937. Spanish socialist of the left wing, teacher member of the CNT in Catalonia. In 1921 with Maurin delegate of the CNT in Moscow. Participant in the founding of the Red Union International (Profintern) and the third conference of the Comintern. After the rupture of relations between the CNT and the Profintern (1922) Nin stayed on as secretary of the latter in Moscow until 1930. He belonged to the left opposition to Stalin. Returned to Spain, he founded the Communist Opposition, which formed in 1935 with Maurin's group, the POUM. From September to December 1936 Secretary of Justice in the Catalonian regional government. In June 1937, on initiative of the Russian agent Orlov, Nin was arrested and murdered in a Communist prison.

**Rudolf Olden** Born 1884, died during World War II, in a torpedoed British ship. Writer and publicist, lawyer in Berlin and editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Emigrated 1933 to France. Olden won fame as author of political biographies (Hitler, 1933; Hindenburg, 1934).

**Franz Oppenheimer** 1864-1943. German economist and sociologist, chairman of the Department of Sociology, University of Frankfurt. Proponent of a libertarian collectivist socialism and was active in the founding of agricultural collectives. He died, an emigrant in the U.S. (Los Angeles). Publications include: *The Agricultural Collective, an Experiment to Positively Overcome Communism by Solving the Collective Problems and the Agrarian Problems*, 1896; *Big Estates and Social Questions*, 1898; *The State*, 1908 (reprint 1964); *System of Sociology*, 1922-35; *Neither Capitalism nor Communism*, 1962.

**George Orwell (Eric Blair)** 1903-1950. English writer. Won fame with his political satire *Animal Farm* (1954) and with *Nineteen-eighty-four*



(1949). Orwell went to Spain at the end of 1936 and fought in Catalonia in the ranks of the POUM. His book *Homage to Catalonia*, published 1938, is one of the most important authentic reports on the antifascist struggle in Spain and the campaign of the Communists against the anarchosyndicalists and the POUM in Catalonia during the summer of 1937.

**Fernand Pelloutier** 1868-1901. French syndicalist. Secretary to the Fédération des Bourses de Travail.

**Angel Pestaña** 1881-1937. Spanish anarchosyndicalist, leader of the moderate wing of the CNT.

**Franz Pfemfert** 1879-1954. German left publicist. Edited the weekly *The Action* in Berlin which was the first organ of literary expressionism and later of the German Communists. He spent his last years as a photographer in Mexico.

**Indalecio Prieto** 1883-1962. Leader of the right wing Spanish socialists. From May 1937 to April 1938 Secretary for Defense in the Negrín government.

**Pierre Joseph Proudhon** French libertarian socialist. Founder of mutualistic and federalistic anarchism, opponent of the authoritarian and centralistic state socialism. Publications include *Quest-ce que la propriété* (What Is Property), 1840; *Systèmes de contradictions économiques ou philosophie de la misère*, 1846; *Le droit au travail et le droit de la propriété*; *Banque du peuple*, 1849; *Les confessions d'un révolutionnaire*, 1849 (Confessions of a Revolutionary, Reinbeck, 1970); *Du principe fédératif*, 1868-76. See also: selected texts published and introduced by Thilo Ramm, Stuttgart, 1963.

**Karl Radek (Sobelsohn)** 1885-1939. Socialist, born in Poland. After 1918 Communist, active in Comintern. Until the expulsion of Trotsky to Turkey (1929) he belonged to the left opposition and later became a follower of Stalin. In January 1937 he was sentenced to ten years in prison for conspiracy against the USSR; he died in prison.

**Simon Radowitzky** 1889-1956. Russian anarchist, emigrated as a young man to Argentina. Was sentenced to life in prison following an assassination attempt against police chief Falcón; pardoned after twenty-one years of detention. From 1939 until his death he lived in Mexico.

**Elisée Réclus** 1830-1905. French geographer and anarchist. From 1851 lived outside of France for political reasons; active during the Paris Commune, six months in prison and expelled from France in 1872. He met Bakunin, who convinced him to become an anti-authoritarian socialist, in French-speaking Switzerland. In 1892 professor in Brussels. Publications include: *Géographie Universelle*, 1875-94; *L'Evolution, et L'Idéal Anarchique*, 1899. See also: Max Nettlau, *Elisée Réclus, Anarchist and Scholar*, Berlin, 1928.

**Ludwig Renn (Friedrich Vieth von Goissenau)** Born 1889. German writer; first officer in the German army; from 1928 Communist. During the civil war in Spain, commander of the 12th International Brigade. From 1939 to 1947 in Mexico and after 1947 in the German



Democratic Republic. Publications include *The Spanish War*, East Berlin and Weimar, 1971.

**Rudolf Rocker** 1873-1958. German anarchist. At first social democrat, turned to anarchism as protest against the authoritarianism and doctrinarism of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. From 1893 to 1895 a political refugee in Paris, then, until 1919, in England. A gentile, he lived among the eastern Jewish proletarians in Whitechapel. He published the Yiddish *Arbeiterfrint* from 1898 to 1914 and, also in Yiddish, the monthly *Germinal*. In 1919 he returned to Germany and was, together with Augustin Souchy and Alexander Schapiro, secretary to the Syndicalist International (IAA) in Berlin. From 1933 until his death Rocker lived in the U.S. Publications include: *The Bankruptcy of the Russian State Communism*, Berlin, 1921, reprinted Berlin, 1968; *Johann Most, The Life of a Rebel*, Berlin, 1924, reprint Glashuetten Taunus, 1973; *Nationalism and Culture*, 1937; *Anarchosyndicalism*, Indore, 1938; *Max Nettlau El Herodoto del Anarquia*, Mexico, 1950. See also: *Rudolf Rocker, Memoirs of an Anarchist*, Frankfurt Main, 1974.

**Kurt Rosenfeld** 1877-1943. Social democrat politician, lawyer. From 1918 to 1919 Secretary of Justice in Prussia; From 1920 to 1923 a member of the reichstag; also lawyer for the German League for Human Rights. Emigrated to the U.S. before the outbreak of World War II.

**Otto Ruehle** 1874-1943. Left wing socialist, pedagogue and publicist, teacher. Member of the SPD and in 1919 of the Communist Party in 1920. Expelled because of anarchist deviation. Emigrated 1933 to Prague, 1936 to Mexico. Consultant in education to the Mexican government.

**Han Ryner (Henry Ner)** 1861-1938. French writer. Publications include: *Les Pacifiques*, translated by Augustin Souchy, Berlin, 1925; *Le cinquième Evangile*.

**Nicolo Sacco** 1891-1927. Anarchist. Born in Italy; after 1908 in the U.S. Sentenced to death together with Bartolomeo Vanzetti for alleged murder of the cashier of a shoe factory. In spite of years of international protests, executed by electric chair in August, 1927. The sentence was clearly influenced by Sacco and Vanzetti's sympathies for anarchism.

**Victor Serge** 1890-1947. Born in Brussels, son of emigrated Russian revolutionaries, early active in the left-socialist and libertarian movements of Belgium and France. In 1919 in the Soviet Union member of the Communist Party and executive member of the Comintern. Arrested because of his leanings toward the left opposition and deported to Orenburg (1933). After an international campaign for his release he left the Soviet Union in 1936 for Belgium. From 1940 he lived in Mexico. Many publications; see especially: *Profession: Revolutionary, Memoirs, 1901/1917/1941*, translated from French, Frankfurt Main, 1967; *For a Renewal of Socialism, Unknown Essays*, translated from French, Hamburg, 1975.

**Ignazio Silone** Born 1900. Italian writer and socialist. Co-founder of



Communist Party of Italy in 1921; left the party in 1930. From 1930 to 1944 lived as an exile in Switzerland. Publications include: *Fontamara*, 1930; *Bread and Wine*, 1936.

**Alexander Schapiro** 1883-1946. Russian anrchosyndicalist. In London in 1901 and there member of the first Russian syndicalist organization. Close contact with Kropotkin. In 1907 secretary of the first anarchosyndicalist bureau. Returned to Russia after the February revolution; active in the anarchosyndicalist group *Golos Truda*, and edited a weekly, later a daily of the same name. He was working temporarily in the foreign office and a member of the all-Russian executive committee for railroads. At the end of 1921 he left Russia, returned again the following year, was then arrested and deported. From the end of 1922 he was in Berlin. At the International Congress of the Revolutionary Socialists in Berlin from December 25, 1922 to January 2, 1923 he was elected, together with Rudolf Rocker and Augustin Souchy, to the secretariat of the newly founded anarchosyndicalist international. Later he went to New York where he lived until his death in 1946.

**Vladimir (Bill) Shatov** Russian anarchist, emigrated as a youth to the U.S. where he was active in the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World). In 1917 he returned to Russia and in 1920 became head of the transportation system of the Far East Republic and later held an important position supervising the construction of the Turko-Siberian railroad. In 1936 he was banished to Siberia and probably assassinated there.

**Isaak Nachman Steinberg** 1888-1957. Russian socialist. In 1906 member of the Social Revolutionary Party. Studied law in Heidelberg, Germany and was practicing law in Moscow. From December 1917 until March 1918, as a left Social Revolutionary people's commissar for justice in the coalition government of Bolsheviks and Social Revolutionaries. In 1923 he lived in Berlin; from 1933 to 1939 in London; and after 1943 in New York. Publications include: *When I Was People's Commissar* (episodes of the Russian Revolution), Muenchen, 1929; *Violence and Terror of the Revolution*, Berlin, 1931 (reprint Berlin, 1974); *In the Workshop of the Revolution*, New York, 1953.

**Max Stirner (Johann Kaspar Schmidt)** 1806-1859. Propagated an extreme individualistic anarchism, above all in his book *Der Einzige und zein Eigentum* (The Ego and His Own). First teacher and then journalist.

**Ernst Toller** 1893-1939. German writer, became famous above all by his expressionistic social-critical plays. He was chairman of the Revolutionary Central Committee of the first Munich Soviet Republic (April 1919), and, after its collapse, was sentenced to five years of "Festungshaft" (fortress detention). At the beginning of World War II emigrated to the U.S. and committed suicide in New York in 1939.

**Leon Trotsky (Bronstein)** 1879-1940. From his youth a revolutionary socialist (at times Menshevik). In October 1905, organized the first soviet. After the February revolution in 1917 he returned to Russia



from exile. Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, first Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet government, then Secretary for Defense and creator of the Red Army. After Lenin's death he was pushed out of all his positions by Stalin. In 1917 he was expelled from the party and in 1929 deported from the Soviet Union. In July 1940 he was assassinated in Mexico by an agent of Stalin.

**Bartolomeo Vanzetti** 1888-1927. Born in Italy, came to the U.S. as a young anarchist. Sentenced to death in 1921, executed in 1927 together with Sacco.

**Pancho Villa** 1877-1923. Mexican peasant leader of a guerilla army in the northwest of Mexico. In 1915 he retired from active politics and was assassinated in 1923.

**Voline (Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eichenbaum)** 1882-1945. Russian anarchist. In 1905 member of the Social Revolutionary Party. Fled to Paris before his banishment where he joined the anarchist movement. In 1915 sentenced to detainment in a concentration camp, but escaped to New York. Returned to Russia in July 1917. Director of the newly founded Anarchosyndicalist Propaganda Union in Petrograd and Moscow. From August 1919 to the beginning of 1920 he directed the "information service" of the Makhno movement. Arrested in March 1920 and temporarily released. By the end of 1920 he had been arrested again. In the summer of 1921, on the occasion of the Congress of the Profintern in Moscow, he started a hunger strike together with other anarchists. After his release Voline lived at first in Berlin, in 1924 in Paris, later in Nimes and Versailles. He died September 18, 1945 in Paris. Publications include *The Unknown Revolution*, Detroit/Chicago, 1974.

**Clara Zetkin** 1857-1933. German socialist politician, teacher. Edited from 1891 to 1916 the Social Democratic Women's periodical *Equality*. From 1920 KPD, from 1920 to 1933 a member of the reichstag.

**G. E. Zinoviev (Radomylski)** 1883-1936. Russian Communist. After 1903 a Bolshevik, close collaborator with Lenin. From 1919 to 1926 secretary of the party organization in Petrograd (Leningrad). President of the executive committee of the Comintern and member of the Politbureau of the party. After Lenin's death he supported Stalin against Trotsky, however in 1925 Kamenev and Trotsky were at the helm of the opposition against Stalin. In 1927 he was, for the first time, expelled from the Communist Party, which he was permitted to rejoin from 1928 to 1932 and from 1933 to 1935. In 1935 he was sentenced for moral responsibility in the assassination of Kirov to ten years in prison and in 1936, in the first Moscow show trial, sentenced to death together with Kamenev and executed.







## Reference Notes

1. The pamphlet was published in spite of its prohibition in *The Socialist* (no. 19, 1912). See: Gustav Landauer, *Perception and Liberation: Selected Essays and Speeches*.
2. In his book *Anarchism: History and Presence of a Utopia*, Vienna, Zurich, Munich, 1970.
3. Landauer, *op. cit.*
4. The number of members at the peak of their influence was 17,000 and in the 1950s more than 20,000. The SAC published the daily *Arbetaren*, which today is a weekly.
5. See *La Révolution inconnue* by Voline. See also: Oskar Anweiler, *Die Rätebewegung in Russland, 1905-1921*, Leiden, 1958 about the movement for workers' councils (soviets) in Russia.
6. In his book *La Révolution inconnue*, Voline gives a vivid description of these events. A German translation of this work under the title *Die Unbekannte Revolution* was published in Hamburg in three volumes in 1975-77. An incomplete two-volume edition in English was published under the titles *The Russian Revolution Betrayed* and *The Unknown Revolution*, New York/London, 1954-55. The complete work was published in English in one volume under the title *The Unknown Revolution*, Detroit/Chicago, 1974, reprinted 1990.
7. Commission to Fight Counterrevolution and Sabotage, organized in 1917. In 1922, with the same prerogatives, the GPU was founded; today called KGB.
8. An article about the delegates' talks with Trotsky was published after their return from Moscow in August 1921 under my name in *The Syndicalist*.
9. From December 1917 until the peace of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) Left Social Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks formed a coalition government.
10. See: *When I Was a People's Commissar, Episodes of the Russian Revolution*, Muenchen 1929; *Force and Terror During the Revolution*, Berlin, 1931 (reprinted Berlin 1974).
11. New York, 1953.
12. See: Bertram Wolfe, *The Bridge and the Abyss* (Bruecke und Abgrund), Wien, Frankfurt, Zurich, 1970.
13. *Ibid.*
14. This letter was published for the first time in the *New Leader* (London, July 22, 1920). For a German translation of this letter see *Syndicalist*, no. 29, 1920 (appendix).
15. Francois Noel Babeuf (alias Grachus) 1760-1797. After 1793 in Paris. Propagated in his publication *Le Tribun du Peuple* a radical revolutionary action to set up a "Republic of Equals." The conspiracy of the Equals against the Directorate led by him collapsed. He and his co-conspirators were sentenced to death and executed.
16. The insurrection of the Kronstadt sailors against party dictatorship of the Bolsheviks (all power to the soviets and not the parties) was



- liquidated by the Red Army by March 18, 1921. See Anweiler, *op. cit.*, 308 ff. and Alexander Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*, Berlin, 1922, Ida Mett, *La Commune de Cronstadt: Crépuscule sanglant des Soviets*, Paris, 1949; Fritz Kool (Erwin Oberlander), *Workers Democracy or Party Dictatorship*, Olten and Freiburg, 1967, documents of world revolution, vol. 2.
17. G. P. Maximoff, *The Guillotine at Work, Twenty Years of Terror in Russia*, Chicago, 1940.
  18. Dukhobors (Russian) "Fighters for the Spirit," a sect formed in the middle of the eighteenth century based on a spiritual belief in God and a severe ethical disinclination to authority, oaths and military service. In 1944-45 its members were forcibly settled in the Caucasus; in 1888-89 many of its members emigrated to Canada and the U.S., where several Dukhobor communities still exist.
  19. Historical background: 1934 was the time of the Moscow-inspired Popular Front policy. The Communist CGTU rejoined the neutral CGT. A decade later the Communists outnumbered the socialists and neutrals to the extent that the latter felt as strangers in their own organization. They left and founded their own union, the CGTFO (Confédération Générale du Travail-Force Ouvrière). At the present time France has five unions independent of each other.
  20. See: Rudolf Rocker, *Memoirs of a German Anarchist*, edited by Magdalena Melnikow and Hans Peter Duerr, Introduction by Augustin Souchy, Frankfurt, 1974.
  21. Rudolf Rocker, *Max Nettlau, El Herodoto de la Anarquía*, Mexico, 1950 (German translation in preparation).
  22. See: Pierre Ramus, *Victims and Martyrs of Chicago*, Wien, 1911; Horst Karasch (ed.), *The German Anarchists of Chicago*, speeches and biographies, Berlin, 1975.
  23. J. Jackson, New York, 1928; Felix Frankfurter, *The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti*, 1927, reprinted 1961; David Felix, *Protest: Sacco and Vanzetti and the Intellectuals*, 1965.
  24. First published under the title *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, later also translated into German. See also: Alexander Berkman, *Die Tat* (action), Frankfurt, 1976.
  25. In 1937 I wrote a documentary about collectivization in Spain, published under the title *Collectivizations—l'oeuvre constructive de la révolution espagnole en Barcelona*, and in 1965 a second extended edition in Toulouse. A German translation is in the making at the Karl Kramer publishing house, Berlin; Erich Gerlach/Augustin Souchy, *The Social Revolution in Spain, Collectivization of Industry and Agriculture in Spain 1936-1939, Documentation by Workers and Peasants*, Berlin, 1974. Furthermore see: *Entre campesinos aragoneses*, Augustin Souchy, Barcelona, 1938.
  26. In the election campaign of the German Federal Republic of Germany a quarter of a century later the Landau case was again brought to public attention. Landau was the author of a report on the situation in Spain. It was alleged that he handed a copy of this report to the correspondent of the Norwegian workers press, at



that time Willy Brandt. Allegedly this copy found its way to Moscow via friendly elements who had contact with Willy Brandt and then also with the Communists, either by error or negligence. When Brandt was a candidate for the chancellorship Hans Frederick published a book on the candidates with the purpose of establishing some link between Brandt and Landau's death; the purpose was to discredit Brandt.

27. The Russian aid in arms soon proved to be a scandalous deception. Diego Abad de Santillán, at the outbreak of the civil war secretary to the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) and later head of the Department of Economic Affairs of Catalonia, wrote in his memoirs: "Durruti came with his men from the Aragonian front to Madrid, threatened by Franco's troops. When he arrived he called me up between two and three in the morning at my Barcelona apartment. He was rightly upset. 'You gave me rifles that do not work; send me hand grenades.' I promptly complied and gave the orders. The rifles sent by the Russians were of Swiss origin and made in 1888. The bullets were also from this time. I was under the impression we would win a battle when a few thousand of these rifles were sent, but there had been no time to test them. With these weapons of 1880 we sent Durruti to Madrid. The Republic paid Stalin's help with gold of the Spanish State Bank."
28. Jose Zorrilla y Moral, Spanish poet, 1817-1893
29. Publicist Ret Marut who edited in Munich the periodical *Der Ziegelbrenner* (The Brickmaker). In 1918 active in the Bavarian Soviet Republic, arrested after its collapse, fled and disappeared. Style tests were controversial. Kurt Tucholsky was more sceptical than Muehsam and Graf.
30. The king of the Franks, Chlodwig (466-511) underwent baptism in 498 in Reims by Bishop Remigius and thus became a Catholic Christian and did not convert to Arianism, the creed of east Germanic tribes.
31. Emigration from countries where revolutionary land distributions took place into industrial countries of the West is now a general phenomenon. When Yugoslavia opened its borders for emigration 800,000 workers (up to this date) left to find jobs in the western world. And if the Soviet Union and other east European countries would do the same millions would find their way out of the Communist paradise into the capitalist hell.
32. José Martí (1853-1895), poet and publicist, the spiritual leader of the Cuban independence movement. He died in the war against Spain in 1895.
33. Generally the Cuban Spanish differs from the Mexican in cadence and timber. The Cuban speaks fast, sonorously and vividly; the Mexican slowly, calmly and reverently. The low melodious manner of expression is—according to a Hispanic philologist—an aftereffect of centuries of ancestral submission of the Mexican Indios.
34. A "precarista" is a peasant whose property rights are unclear. When he works land hitherto fallow or when the land value increases due



to construction of a new road, the *de jure* owner comes forward and states his claim. Time consuming and costly court procedures very often result in dispossession of the settler. There were tens of thousands of precaristas; the libertarian movement embraced their cause and through their intervention Alvares won.

35. In the first year of the new era Fidel Castro did not openly admit his leanings toward Communism. It was a strategic ruse. Later he said that he had always been a Marxist-Leninist.
36. Kolkhoz: big Russian agricultural enterprise. Kolkhozes were established after the October revolution in 1917, first on a voluntary basis with rights of self-determination. After 1929 Russian agricultural production was forcibly collectivized.
37. Che Guevara, a comrade in arms of Fidel Castro, became famous as an organizer of guerrillas. From 1966 to the beginning of 1967 he led a group of guerrillas in Bolivia. He was killed after being taken prisoner by Bolivian government forces.
38. See: Roland Huntford, *Welfare Dictatorship, the Swedish Model*, Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, 1973.
39. Leon Gambetta (1838-1882), Minister of the Interior of the Republic of National Defense after the fall of Paris. He resigned in February 1971. Adriano Olivetti (1901-1960), founder of the Movimento di Comunita, was elected to the Italian parliament in May 1958. Publications include: *L'ordine Politico della Comunita dello Stato*, 1947; *Societa, Stato Comunita*, 1952.
40. Robert Bosch, 1861-1942, founded in 1886 the R. B. Bosch Shop for Precision Mechanics and Electromechanics, later Robert Bosch Ltd. He introduced, among other social initiatives, the eight-hour work day in 1906.
41. Hassidism was a religious movement originating with Jews of Eastern Europe, propounding mystic practical piety. Buber wrote among others, *Hassidic Books*, 1928; *Tales of Hassidism*, 1950.
42. A reference to Baron Edmund James de Rothschild (1845-1934), Jewish philanthropist who promoted and financed colonization in Palestine.
43. A. D. Gordon, born 1856 in Russia, went in 1904 to Palestine where he started out as an agricultural laborer. His example and his writings influenced strongly the pioneer movement of Jewish youth. He died February 1922 in Degania.
44. *The Imperfect Society*, Vienna, Munich, Zurich, 1969, here quoted from the pocketbook edition Reinbeck, 1971, p. 162. Milovan Djilas was born in 1911 in Montenegro; from 1932 a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia; 1938 member of the Central Committee and 1940 also of the Politbureau. Organized, together with Tito, the Partisan struggle against the Germans. After 1945 minister and secretary general of the Politbureau and its vice president. In 1945 he was relieved of his functions because of publications critical of the regime and sentenced to eighteen months in prison. In 1956 he was given another prison sentence for his public approval of the insurrection in Hungary. While imprisoned he wrote



his book *The New Class*, which brought him another sentence of seven years. Released in January 1961 on probation, he was arrested again for publication of his *Conversations with Stalin*, sentenced again to five years. He was pardoned in 1966.

45. *Rerum Novarum*, encyclical by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 which brought about the unification of Catholic workers' associations to organize the Confederazione Italiana dei Lavoratori and establishment of similar Catholic unions in other countries.





*Theo Waldinger*



## A Note on the Translator, Theo Waldinger

Born in Vienna, Austria, in 1903, Theo Waldinger became a socialist in 1911, at the age of eight, when his older brother Ernst—a well-known poet and translator of Emily Dickinson and other American poets—took him to a socialist-led hunger march. In 1918 he joined the socialist youth movement (Socialistische Arbeiterjugend).

Together with several other young followers of the great author, satirist and social critic Karl Kraus, Theo took part in an informal group of socialist intellectuals dubbed “Die Felonen” by novelist/philosopher Elias Canetti. Others in the group included sculptor Felix Kohn; Carl Spitz, who would later become an official of the longshoremen’s union in San Francisco; and the noted physician/author, Fritz Jensen.

Theo’s brother Ernst married Sigmund Freud’s niece, Beatrice Wintersnitz, and over the years Theo’s friends, acquaintances and correspondents have included prominent figures in the psychoanalytic movement—including Anna Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Marie Bonaparte, Helene Deutsch and Kurt R. Eissler—as well as many of the leading revolutionary intellectuals of Europe and the United States.

Theo emigrated to Paris in 1938, to New York a year later, and then to Boston, where he remained for thirty-five years. In 1973 he moved to Chicago, where he lives today.

Theo’s wife, Dr. Clara Waldinger, enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a pediatrician and public health specialist in Vienna, in Boston, and in later years at Chicago’s Loyola University. She died in 1989. They were married fifty-eight years.

In 1974 Theo was elected to the Board of Directors of the Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company in Chicago, and he has served as its President since 1987.

In 1990 he contributed a long introduction to a posthumously published volume of his brother Ernst’s collected poems and essays, *Noch vor dem jungsten Tag*, published by Otto Mueller in Salzburg. He is currently completing his autobiography.



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